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December 17, 1895.

No. 960.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 cents.

Vol. XXXVII.



OR, FLYER FRED'S CLEAR CASE.

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AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MURDER AND DOUBLE MYSTERY.
The youngest employee in the house of Thomas Strongenberg & Son, was Fred Fly.

It was a great wholesale house on Broad-

FLYER FRED LOOKED AROUND QUICKLY AND FO

THE BROADWAY SPORT.

The Broadway Sport.

way, New York, and from morning until night, every day in the year, it did a rushing business, out-of-town buyers coming and going continuously.

Fred Fly, or Fly Fred, as he was commonly called, was only a messenger in the establishment, and the least on the list; but even that was something in so large a concern, and promotion would be sure to come if he attended to his duties and proved himself worthy.

There were numerous messengers in the store, from gray-haired David Pratt, the bank messenger, down to Fred—whose duties were of the humblest order, yet not without something of responsibility; every employe in the house had to bear a certain proportion of that. And of all the messengers, not even excepting the mentioned veteran in service, Fred Fly was the favorite.

About fourteen years of age, he was a bright-eyed, keen-witted boy, strong in body and sturdy of character, with no vices, unless a strong liking for fun could by any stretch be called such; ever neat in appearance, and always respectful, and so alert for duty whenever called on that he was familiarly known as Flyer Fred—a sobriquet of which he was proud. Fred was the only child of a widowed mother, and his father had been an employe in the same house before him. It had been a pleasure to Mr. Stoughtenberg to give Fred a place as soon as he was old enough to begin.

In this house, honor counted for everything.

Just as soon as an employe was found deficient in that commanding trait, no matter how high or how humble his station, there was a vacancy, and "the place that had known him once knew him no more forever."

Honor was the foundation upon which Thomas Stoughtenberg had builded, and it was the corner-stone of the great and still growing business he had established years before. His house was known from Maine to California, and few and far between were the complaints of customers that came up for adjustment. On the other hand, many a retailer could thank "Old Tom" Stoughtenberg for a helping hand in time of threatening crisis or depression in trade.

Hence, it was not known that Mr. Stoughtenberg had an enemy in the world; indeed, it was almost next to impossible that he could have. He was respected by all who knew him; esteemed, honored, and by many, loved. Judge, then, of the sensation, the almost panic, that was created when this gentle old man was found lying in his office one morning, foully murdered! The news acted like a stroke of paralysis to the entire establishment. Employes, from highest to lowest, were dumfounded and rendered incapable of doing anything. Business was brought to an immediate standstill, for customers felt almost as little like being served as the clerks felt like serving them.

George Stoughtenberg, the son, appeared to be almost crazed with grief. He was a man past forty years of age, but he cried like a child when the sad news was made known to him. Nor was he the only one who wept. Old David Pratt, the bank messenger, for one, sobbed aloud as if his heart would break. Forgetful of everything, the employes left their stations and ran in the direction of the office, and it required all the efforts of Samuel Wolraven, the superintendent, to restore anything like order in the great establishment. George Stoughtenberg had come out of his father's office only a few minutes before, leaving his father alive and well, as he declared; and to learn of his sudden and violent death was almost more than

he could bear. So far as known, he had been the last one to see his father alive—save, of course, the murderer, whoever he might be.

The one to make the discovery had been Flyer Fred.

Hearing the tap of Mr. Stoughtenberg's bell, summoning him, he had obeyed the call promptly.

What was his horror to find his beloved employer breathing his last, his arm across the table and hand on the bell, and a huge knife buried to the hilt in his back!

"Mr. Stoughtenberg!" the boy cried. "Who did it?"

The old man tried to lift his head, tried to speak, but with the effort he expired.

The messenger ran out of the office, calling aloud for help, and those who happened to be nearest were the first to respond, being Mr. Wolraven and two of the clerks.

Fred, in his horror, had called out so loudly that he was heard all over the floor, and so had caused the scene of dismay we have lightly touched upon, and as soon as George Stoughtenberg was seen coming, Mr. Wolraven hastened out to do what he could to keep order.

What immediately followed must be briefly passed over.

It was a time of confusion, a time when no one knew what to do or hardly what he was doing.

As soon as George Stoughtenberg had in a measure recovered from the first shock, he ordered the office cleared, the store closed, and directed a messenger to notify the police.

A police sergeant was speedily on hand with a couple of men, and with them came a detective in citizen's dress. The latter was a keen-eyed man, short of stature and stocky of build, whose name was John Collins. At first he had nothing to say, merely using his eyes and ears.

The police sergeant asked numerous questions, to all of which, and the answers thereto, the detective listened attentively.

"I understand that you were the last one in the office previous to the crime, sir," said the detective, when the sergeant concluded. "Was your father expecting any one, to your knowledge?"

"Yes, he was looking for a man," answered George, "but that can have had nothing to do with the crime. I know the man, and he has not yet arrived. It can be of little avail, now, whether he comes or not."

"Who is he?" asked the detective.

"His name is Floyd Kempton; he is also called the Broadway Sport, I believe."

"Ah! Do you happen to know what your father's business was with him? This may be the means of throwing some light upon the matter."

"I do not know. I was to have learned when he came, for my father had asked me to remain within call so that I could come in when the man arrived. It was something of importance."

"Yes, I can well believe that," said the detective. "I suppose you know all about Mr. Kempton, do you not?"

"Well, yes, I will admit that I do."

"Then it is not necessary for me to tell you. I regret exceedingly that he did not get here before this happened."

During this time Fred Fly had been a quiet observer of all that took place. He had given attention to everything and everybody, trying to find something that would solve the mystery.

That, however, seemed impossible. If the police were puzzled, of what use for a mere boy to try to discover the murderer? And yet he meant to try, for Mr. Stoughtenberg had been his friend—had been his mother's friend—after his father's death, and he resolved within himself that the

murderer should not go unpunished if he could prevent it.

Nothing further was to be done, there and then, and the police gave permission for the removal of the body.

The police withdrew, save the detective, and while preparations were being made for the removal of the body, the store was shut.

A notice had been put in the principal window, stating that owing to the sudden death of the senior member, the store would be closed temporarily. What had really happened was known to only a comparatively small number of persons, until later on.

But a few remained in the building; George Stoughtenberg, Samuel Wolraven, David Pratt and two or three more of the older employes, and the detective; and while these were still talking about the sad occurrence, and in vain trying to bring out something that would throw some light upon the mystery, a man came in.

"Mr. Stoughtenberg dead?" he exclaimed, interrogatively.

"Not only dead, but was murdered," spoke John Collins. "Can you give any light upon it, Kempton?"

"Murdered! You here, Collins? Tell me, in the name of Heaven, who it was murdered that fine old gentleman? Mr. Stoughtenberg," to the son, "you have my sympathy. I had an appointment with your father for this hour."

"Yes, so I know, and I hope that you can give us some information," said George. "What was the nature of the business you had with my father? Was it anything that can in any manner have had to do with this terrible deed? If so, pray let us know it immediately!"

"Is it possible that you do not know?" cried the newcomer. "If that is the case, we are in the dark, indeed, for that is what I came here to find out. That it was of great importance, I knew; but what it was, I know not."

CHAPTER II.

UNWELCOME SUSPICION.

Floyd Kempton, the Broadway Sport, was a private detective.

So "private" was he, in fact, that but few, comparatively speaking, knew that he was a detective. All who knew him by sight, or by casual acquaintance, supposed him to be a man about town, a sport; hence his sobriquet, the Broadway Sport. He never appeared openly as such, in any case where it could be avoided. He did his work, reported to his client, and the police did the rest when the evidence necessitated.

It was because of this comparative secrecy in the man's character and calling that Detective Collins had asked George Stoughtenberg guardedly if he knew all about Kempton, and the reply to the question had been as quoted. Kempton was of the greatest service to the police at times, and it was to their interest to guard his incognito.

The Broadway Sport looked around to note who was present, and there was a moment of silence.

"Yes, we are doubly in the dark," George Stoughtenberg added. "I do not know what my father wanted to see you for, Mr. Kempton, and now that he is dead, perhaps we shall never know."

"We must learn," responded the Broadway Sport, decisively. "There must be some way of finding out, and the police must sift the matter and bring the truth to light," with a glance at Detective Collins. "They must, at any rate, discover who killed him."

"Easier said than done, I am afraid," remarked the police detective. "It is a case now without a clew; but we must under-

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take the work, and try to penetrate the mystery. It will require time, of course. And, since there is nothing more that I can do here, at present, I may as well be going."

Collins took his leave, saying that he was going straight to headquarters to consult with his chief.

When he had departed, Floyd Kempton requested the privilege of a private interview with George Stroughtenberg, whereupon the latter asked all present to leave the office, for a time.

They withdrew, Mr. Wolraven, David Pratt and the others, and the young messenger, and Mr. Stroughtenberg closed the door. He and the private detective then faced each other, and there was a steady, questioning look before either of them said anything.

"Then you were holding nothing back, Mr. Stroughtenberg?" the detective asked.

"Not a thing," the answer. "And you?"

"Nothing."

George Stroughtenberg's countenance fell, and his eyes sought the floor.

"I hoped that you were retaining something that you did not want to mention before the others," he said. "When you made request for this interview, I was sure of it."

"I thought the same respecting you, and asked for the interview in order to give you the opportunity to speak out. Now, indeed, it does assume the shape of a profound mystery. I do not recall that I ever took hold of a case where there was so little light."

"My father gave you no hint of what he wanted to see you for?"

"Not the slightest. He sent me a note, asking me to call on him at ten o'clock this morning, saying it was highly important."

"And he desired me to be on hand, so that I could come in when you arrived. I asked what it was about, but he was busy with his mail and bade me wait the little while until you came."

"And that was the last time you saw him alive?"

"The last time," sadly.

"And how soon after that was the discovery made that he had been murdered?"

"I cannot tell, to the minute, but it did not seem to be more than five minutes, at the most. I had only time to go up to the next floor when the alarm was given."

"And you were the last one seen to enter or leave the office, it appears. There is no other way to get out and in, is there?" looking around. "But it is needless to ask that; I can see for myself. The next person to enter, so far as known, was the boy."

"Yes."

"And it would be the height of folly to think of him as the slayer."

"Absurd. He loved my father, and father thought a great deal of the boy. The boy's father was one of our most trusted employes, and would by this time be holding a high place; in this business, had he lived."

"Mr. Stroughtenberg, it is one of the strangest cases I ever came across in all my experience. We are groping in the dark, entirely. Is there nothing you can point to that will give me a starting clew? Has there been anything amiss here in the house of late? Has your father been having trouble with any one, to lead to this?"

"No, to all, sir. As you well say, we are groping in the dark, and I do not know in what direction to search for light. I can only look to you, Mr. Kempton, and I trust you will be able to clear the matter up and avenge my poor father's death. Indeed, you must do it, you and the police together; I cannot bear the thought of so great a crime going unpunished. Spare no

expense; I will back you, and will handsomely reward you if you succeed."

Their further talk brought out nothing more, and in about half an hour their interview came to an end.

Meanwhile, the others—those who had been requested to leave the office in order that the interview might be strictly private—had been discussing the matter among themselves.

With them it was the same. Nothing could be thought of that would in any way, however remotely, point to a motive for such a deed. And this man, this fellow Kempton, whom George Stroughtenberg had called the Broadway Sport, what of him?

This they asked among themselves, wondering what business he could have had with Mr. Stroughtenberg, or rather Mr. Stroughtenberg with him; and they were at that point when the two men came out of the office.

"Has anything developed?" asked Mr. Wolraven, of George Stroughtenberg.

"Not a thing, Sam," was the response. "Mr. Kempton and I have been trying to discover what father's business with him can have been, but all in vain. I am going home, and the store will remain closed until Monday."

"Very well; and if there is anything I can do, do not fail to command me. This is a terrible thing, God knows, and nothing that can be done must be left undone toward finding and punishing the guilty wretch. Remember me to the family; I will call to-morrow."

A messenger had been sent to the dead merchant's residence to prepare the family for the terrible news, and the body had been taken from the store. The doors were now locked.

When the Broadway Sport turned down Broadway, he was buried in thought, and did not notice the youthful figure which moved along after him, keeping him in sight. Chance if he would have detected him, anyhow, for the Flyer was particularly "fly" at that sort of thing.

More than once he had done good service in following suspected men and getting evidence against them, men who had smartly tried to deal "crooked" with the house in which he was employed; and on one occasion he had been the direct means of landing a "crook" in jail, the fellow having tried to work a "game" on one of the oldest country customers of the house.

All this had awakened something of a detective aspiration in Fred, and now—though he wished it had never come, had never come in that way—he was determined to put his ability to the test. And this was his beginning—suspecting and shadowing the one man of all others who was most likely to be able to do anything toward untying the knot of mystery. But then, how could Fred know that—until he found it out, later on?

And Kempton, as he hurried along, wherever he was going, was turning the matter over and over in his mind, and there was an ugly thought that continually haunted him. Was it a case of parricide? Had George Stroughtenberg committed the deed himself? But, no. That was impossible! The thought was unworthy. The detective tried to shake it off, but it had evidently come to stay; George Stroughtenberg had certainly been the last one in the office, and had not the victim summoned his last spark of life's strength to tap the bell, it might have been an hour before the crime would have become known—and what then?

And so they went, professional and novice, straight into the turmoil of the greatest case that had ever engaged the attention of the Broadway Sport up to that time.

CHAPTER III.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

Flyer Fred did not lose sight of the man he was following, until presently he dodged across Broadway and entered a building.

Fred came to a stop and took a good survey of the building, while he waited for him to reappear. It was an office building, and a name on one of the windows of the third floor soon caught Fred's attention.

The name was Floyd Kempton's, in modest gilt letters—modest, yet sufficiently large to be easily read from the street, and it gave Fred the information that the man had an office in that big collection of offices, whatever his business might be.

Presently the Broadway Sport reappeared, in something of haste and with a puzzled expression.

In his hands he held a slip of paper, which he was reading as he descended the steps, and which, on reaching the sidewalk, he tore in two, crumpled in his hand, and cast away.

Fred was after that paper in a moment, and secured it. Then he was after Kempton immediately, as before, and as he hastened along he unfolded the paper and smoothed out the two pieces to learn what it contained. Yet he did not lose sight of his man.

The very first words of the message caused Fred to give a gasp, and his eyes flew wide open with surprise.

The missive ran as follows:

"Mister Kempton, Detectiv':

"Deer Sur—if 'u' wan't tu heer ov sum'-thin' ov gr'at importens', cum' ri'te away tu No. — H— Street. I w'u'd cum' tu 'ure offis', but I mi'te be seen and nabbed. I know 'u' ar' hot after me, and ther' a'n't no use ov mi tryin' tu fule y'u, so I wan't tu mak' a bargu'n with 'u' and I will put 'u' on to the biggest snap 'u' ever had if 'u' will give me a sho' tu git out ov this hole. Give three knocks on the side door so I will know it is 'u' sure.

"'U' 'NO' WHO."

"Whe—e—ew!" the boy drew a long whistle. "Floyd Kempton a detective! What a bloomin' hass I have made of myself, following him! But nobody knows it but me, and I won't tell—oh, no!"

He was on the point of stopping short and following no further, when a sudden thought struck him. Might he not be of use to the detective in some manner? Suppose he ran forward and asked,

But no, that would not do; he would then have to give away the fact of the mistake he had made. He would run on to the destination and get there first.

Having come to that decision, away he went, turning the matter over in his mind as he ran.

Kempton hastened on, his thoughts busy. The note which he had found on the floor of his office, where it had been shoved under the door, had given him food for reflection.

He could not quite make up his mind whom the note was from. He was a little suspicious about it, and yet it was something that he desired to investigate, for it might be genuine.

There was a case upon which he was working in which an escaped convict, one Rummy Mike, figured largely, and it was just possible that this message was from him. If so, he was in luck; and Mike was mistaken, for it had looked as if Kempton was destined to lose him.

Kempton knew well the locality to which the writer had bidden him to come, and it had been one of Rummy Mike's haunts in time past. The number was a saloon, or had been such—for it was now closed. The Broadway Sport had paid a

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visit to that neighborhood only a few days before, to find out something about Mike, but had found the place closed and a "To Let" notice in one of the windows.

Hence it was that his thoughts had reverted immediately to Rummy Mike, on finding the message under his office door.

And if it was from Mike, he wondered what the "biggest snap" could refer to.

Useless to surmise; there was only one way to find out.

And so he paced onward to ascertain.

The Flyer reached the neighborhood of the saloon first, and with the number fixed in his mind he sauntered along on the opposite side of the street.

"Hello!" he exclaimed to himself, when he located the house and found that it was a closed saloon. "This has a queer look on the face of it. It is head or tail; either that note is genuine or it is a fake to get Mr. Kempton into a trap."

The house was a small one, being one of the two-story brick buildings occasionally seen on some of the old streets, sandwiched between other buildings from two to five stories higher; and it looked as if the whole building was vacant, the dwelling rooms above as well as the saloon below.

The saloon had a main entrance, and to the right of that was a narrow hall door, which was the one evidently referred to in the message as the "side" door. No one was to be seen at any of the windows, nor was any one loitering near either of the entrances. If the person was within, he must be lying particularly low, the boy thought; pretty good evidence of the genuineness of the note, he decided.

Fred sauntered past, and stopped at the corner to read the note over a second time.

While he was thus engaged, Kempton came in sight.

"Now for it," said the boy, to himself. "I don't know what I am to do; it is no funeral of mine, as the boys say, and yet I think I'll hang around and see what comes to pass. It would be a little fresh of me to speak to Mr. Kempton, and he might give me a kick for not minding my own business. No, I'll just hang around and see which way the cat jumps."

The Broadway Sport came on, swinging a lithe cane, and reaching the hall door of the two-story house, gave three lively raps with the knob of his cane on one of the panels.

Fred was watching, taking in the whole of the building at once, which he could easily do, considering that he was some distance away.

What was the boy's surprise to see the head and shoulders of a man appear over the cornice of the house, a man with an evil cast of countenance, and who, after one quick look downward, drew back again.

"Hang me fer a sick kitten if I like the looks of things!" Fred said to himself. "This is either a trap for the detective or the man who sent for him is taking mighty good care not to be fooled if he can help it. Which is it?"

The young shadower was almost tempted to run forward and tell the Broadway Sport what he had seen, but hardly knew how to go about it; and while he hesitated the door opened. Kempton stepped within and the door closed after him with a rather sharp snap, as the watcher thought. The Fly Ferret, as Fred might now well be called, did not like the looks of things.

"No, sir; don't like it a bit," he said, to himself. "Broadway Sport looks like a keen one, but the best of 'em will get tripped up once in a while, and I bet that's what has happened to him this time. I'll hunt up a policeman, I think, and if he don't come out of that crib in due season, 'cording to what I think due season ought

to be, I'll have the officer break in and see what's up, if I get my coat tails kicked clear over my shoulders for doing it!"

Accordingly, the Flyer looked up and down the streets, and seeing no officer in sight, set out to find one.

Meanwhile, Floyd Kempton was fighting for his life.

When the door had opened to him, he took a quick survey of the person who had opened it. It was a man, and not a very prepossessing fellow either, but one whom the detective knew at sight he could overcome if it came to a test of muscular prowess between them.

"You are the man who wants to see me?" the sport asked.

"No, it's my partner; he is in a room jes' back here. Come in an' let me shut the door."

"Two of them, eh?" the detective made note. Well, he thought he was a match for them, being on his guard, so he stepped boldly in and the man closed the door.

No sooner within, however, than two big, brawny fellows sprang upon him from behind, one from each corner, where they had evidently been standing close to the wall, and Kempton was rendered helpless before he had a chance to defend himself.

The fellow who had closed the door now sprang to the assistance of the other two, and by this time a fourth was running down the stairs to render still further aid. Kempton had walked into a trap, and now he realized it to its full extent and saw how unwittingly he had allowed himself to be tricked. He struggled, but that was in vain, against such odds.

CHAPTER IV.

PADDY GALLAGHER AND THE FRAU.

Two big doors in the front of the Stroughtenberg building were very seldom opened.

In New York, space is too highly valued for any to be allowed to go to waste, and here, in the broad span just outside these doors, an old German woman kept a pie stand.

She was known as Frau Reizenstein, and if there was any one who could attest to the merit of her stock in trade, it was Paddy Gallagher, a porter in the big store. And he did not always have to pay for what he ate, either, for Paddy and the pie-woman were good friends.

Paddy nearly always bought his noon-day lunch of Frau Reizenstein, and between times, if there happened to be a remaining piece that was in danger of going to waste if not attended to promptly, and Paddy happened to be in sight, that piece was given to him. Paddy was an old man, older perhaps than the pie-woman, and it was a joke in the store that he was making love to Frau Reizenstein.

The old Irishman took the joke good-naturedly, declaring that he was more in love with the old lady's pies.

One of Paddy's duties was to see to the closing and opening of the store night and morning—indeed, that was about all he had to do. Owing to his age and long service, but little else was required of him.

On this day, when he had put the last bolt in place, and had turned the great key in the big lock, after the departure of the others, he went sadly to the pie-woman's stand, looking for consolation—not pie, this time; for there was a lump in his throat.

"Begorra, but isn't it too bad, Frau Reizenstein!" he cried, "dhat so foine a man as Misther Stroughtenberg should be murthered!"

"O, weh! O, weh! Das that mir leid!" the pie-woman ejaculated, with gesticulations to express her grief, which were as good as a translation of the spoken words. "It peen too pad, too pad!"

"And av Oi could only lay me twa hands upon dhe gossoon phwat done i, Frau Reizenstein, dhere would be no job fur dhe hangman in dhe case, Oi promise ye! Never a foiner man ever lived nor phwat Misther Stroughtenberg was, and many a kindness he done to mesel', al-lanna!"

"Ya, ya, d'ot vas so, d'ot vas so; he vas mooch petter als his son. I suppose now I have me to move mine stand, for Georg, would have me had out mit' d'is place, long ago if it had been for his fadder nicht. Herr Stroughtenberg var ein goote man; but der son, he peen too proud, ain'd id? I not like me the way he talk about his fadder gestern."

Paddy had known the old woman so long that he could understand most of her commonest German words.

"Phwy, phwat did he say about his father yesterday?" he inquired.

"He vas talking to ein man, yust by der oder door, and I heard him swear and say he couldn't do id, for cause his old man would not agree mit der peesness. I not like me dot."

"Och! dhat naden't count," said Paddy. "Oi happen to know somethin' about dhat gossoon mesel', and it was all right dhat dhe ould man wouldn't let him have phwat he wanted. George didn't mane no disrepect whin he called his father ould man, be sure av dhat."

"Vell, vell, I not like me d'ot, anyhow. Whatev'r id vas, George vas willing to do id, but his fadder vas not, unt George put him all der blame on his fadder. Unt d'ot oder fellers, he get him mad mit himself all over, unt he say what if George don't do somed'ings for him, he plow ould unt dell what he know 'pout George; unt d'en George say he see what could be done."

"Is dhat so, Frau Reizenstein?"

"To peen sure id vas so, Baddy Gallagher."

"Begorra, maybe it wasn't dhe man Oi'm t'inkin' about."

"He vas ein younger man, unt George call him py name von Frank."

"Yis, yis, dhat is him; dhat is dhe same spalpeen, Frank Allen; Oi know him!"

"Vell, George he say he see what could be done, unt der oder feller he say he give him yust one day to let him know, unt so d'ey bart; unt George he shake his fist."

"He is a bad egg, is dhat same Frank Allen, and Oi wouldn't wondher a bit av he hadn't got a hold upon George Stroughtenberg somehow. Begorra, it looks so, by dhe phwat ye have been afther telling me. By dhe same token, ye haven't seen him around here dhis marnin'?"

"Nein, nein; I have not him seen after d'ot, Baddy. But I have peen d'inking aboudt id, after d'is what's habbened, unt I vonder me if d'ot fellers could had anyd'ings to done mit der killing Herr Stroughtenberg? Id could not peen possible d'ot George would kill him his own fadder, vas id? D'ot peen too pad, so I say me nicht so, pretty gwick."

"Great Hivvins!" cried Paddy Gallagher, turning instantly as pale as a ghost and looking quickly around to see if anybody could have by any chance overheard the remark; "ye mustn't be sayin' av dhat again, Frau Reizenstein! George is as innocent av dhat crime as me or you, but all dhe same he was dhe last man in dhe office, 'cept dhe murtherin' villain himself, and Misther Wolraven has been afther remindin' us all to be mum on dhat point."

The old pie woman, too, turned pale, seeing the effect of her words upon the old porter.

"Mein Gott!" she ejaculated, "vas d'ot so? Id vas onpossible, Baddy Gallagher. Id vas only a d'ings what come to me my mind in, unt I pooty gwick said no to

d'ot. Nein, nein, id was not to peen relieved for one minute, Baddy Gallagher; it could not peen, nohow."

"Ye are roight, it couldn't, begob! All dhe same, fur dhe love av Hivvin, don't ye be afther sayin' wan wurred about it, fur no knowin' phwat meanin' some jack-ass av a police detective moight twist out av it, and be gettin' av George into more throuble nor phwat he is in already, al-lanna! Dhe poor man wept loike any babbly whin he heard his father was kilted, so he did."

"Id vas noddings I peen saying, unt don'dt you forget d'ot," the old pie woman declared. "All der same, I can't forget me how mad d'ot feller looked when he vent avay, unt how mad George looked when he shook his fist after him behind his back when his face wasn't in front no more unt he couldn't seen him do id. But d'ot vas not all, py good deal; dhene vas anoder mans what cooms himself here gestern, unt he gone avay again mit a face like donner, maype. Unt when he vas on der oder side mit der street across, he look him back unt he shake his fist at d'em whole houses."

"Oh, b's! And who was he, Frau Reizenstein?"

"You d'ink what I knows eferybody, Batty Gallagher?"

"No; but begorra, Oi want to know who dhat man was, you bet!" asserted the Irishman.

"You hafe peen gone further as Frau Reizenstein to find oudt, maype, ain'dt id?"

"Phwat fur a lookin' man vas he, ould woman? Begorra, it is dhat much ye can be tellin' me, and ye know anything."

"Vell, he vas nicht ein yoonger man, but ein alter; maype apoudt as old as Herr Stroughtenberg. Unt he vas so mad apoudt somed'ings he know him not what he vas doing, ich denke."

"And ye have not been afther seeing him again?"

"Nein, Baddy; d'ot vas der last what I seen mit him; but if he coom again I seen him some more, you bet!"

"An' av he does come again, begorra, be afther puttin' a copper onto him. It is as maybe as not dhat he knows somethin' about phwat has happened, fur it is dhe devil's own mystery."

"Unt d'ot vas not all yet, Baddy."

"Phwat more, dhen?"

"Why, d'ot mans he not peen gone so long time, when Herr Stroughtenberg coom out der store, mit, unt he look him oop unt down die strasse, als like he peen looking for somebody, maype."

"And you think he was lookin' fur dhat man?"

"I don't know," with a shrug. "But all der same, now I remember me apoudt id, his face vas red all ofer like gootness gracious, unt he look like he had peen mad already some more before he coom out, ain'dt id? I don't know; I yust told you what I seen."

"Frau Reizenstein, dhis is something dhat dhe police ought to know at wanst, and, by dhe same token, it is Paddy Gallagher will go and tell them, too! But, fur dhe love of Hivvin, as Oi have already tould ye, don't ye so much as breathe wan wurred to anybody dhat will mix dhe name of George Stroughtenberg up in dhe matter, fur it is heartbroken wi'd grief he is already, so he is."

"Frau Reizenstein knows welvel ist zwie unt drei, Baddy Gallagher. I will say me noddings apoudt id. Here, have ein bleece pie before you go—"

"Thanks to ye, ould woman, but dhere is dhat in me t'roat would choke me dead an' I thried to ate it."

With that the old porter hastened off, the pie woman looking after him.

CHAPTER V.

WHO WAS THE OLD MAN?

Paddy Gallagher went straight to police headquarters, as he had declared his intention of doing.

Making known who he was, he had no difficulty in getting an interview with the chief, who was just at that time hearing the report of Detective Collins concerning the murder.

The old porter went in, hat in hand, appearing a little awkward and out of place, but full of determination to perform the duty that had brought him there to the best of his ability. He looked around the room first, then at those who were assembled.

"You say that you came from Stroughtenberg's store?" he was asked.

"Dhat same Oi do, sor," the old man answered, "and by dhe same token it is business has brought me here, so it is. Oi bel'ave dhat Oi have got hould av something dhat may throw some light upon dhe mysthery av me masther's death."

"Let us hear it, then, by all means," said the chief. "Be as quick about it as you can."

Just how quick Paddy was we will not show by quoting, for he had to tell it in his own way, with a great many "sez she" and "sez I's," but finally the police were in possession of the information he had for them.

"There may be something in this, Collins," said the chief.

"So I think," the detective agreed.

"But Oi suppose it is too late to do any good," concluded Paddy, sadly.

"Why so?" asked the chief.

"Sure, an' he is dhe guilty wan, he will never show his nose dhene again, and av he does come ye will know by dhe same token dhat he is innocent."

"There is logic in that," the chief mused. "Still, if he does come again he must be got hold of and made to tell what he knows, for it may be something to throw light upon the enigma."

"Nothing must be overlooked," said Collins.

"I will put a man there. He will go back with you, Paddy, and you must introduce him to the old pie woman and tell her to point out the man to him if he should show himself there again."

"Begorra, it is wi'd deloight Oi will do dhat same," declared the old Irishman.

Accordingly a man was detailed for the duty, who accompanied Paddy back to the store, where the chief's directions were carried out and where the man took up his station.

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon, when the detective was in the act of trying the virtues of one of Frau Reizenstein's pies, that the looked-for but hardly-expected man put in his appearance, and the detective was somewhat surprised when the pie woman gave him the signal.

Looking, he saw a man crossing the street toward the store, a man far along on the down hill of life, yet who dodged briskly in and out among the many passing vehicles. The man was just then giving no attention to anything but his own safety, and the detective had excellent opportunity to take a good look at him without being observed.

"Is that him?" he asked.

"Yaw, d'ot ish der same fellers," the pie woman assured.

That the old man was not a resident of the city the detective knew at sight.

He looked to be from the country, and that not near at hand, either. The detective set him down for a Westerner, and thought he was not mistaken.

The old fellow dodged the last vehicle, and reached the sidewalk in safety, when,

for the first time, he looked up, and then, seeing the store closed, a look of surprise came over his face.

He surveyed the whole store front, and in a moment his eyes rested upon the card that was placed in one of the windows. He dodged across the sidewalk in haste to read it, and the moment he had done so he grew deathly pale, grasping the iron railing for support.

This, to the detective's acute mind, told a whole story.

It was plain that this was the first knowledge the man had received of Mr. Stroughtenberg's death. That it had given him a great shock was evident, and that he was innocent of any share in the crime seemed conclusive.

Recovering a little, he read the notice over again, and wiped his forehead and face with a huge red handkerchief, for a damp perspiration had broken out upon him and he looked deathly.

"Was he a friend of yours, sir?" asked the detective, who had stepped to his side.

"Y—yes, I knew him," the old man answered. "Can you tell me when he died, sir?" he asked.

"He was murdered—"

"Murdered!" the old man almost screamed.

"He was murdered in his office this morning."

"My God! Is it possible?"

"Then you had not heard about it?"

"No, no; I had not heard a word about it!"

"Quite a shock to you, then, no doubt. Perhaps you came to see him, which would make it all the more severe."

"Yes, I did come to see him; I had an appointment with him— But, that can be nothing to you, of course. Poor Thomas! I little thought when I saw him—"

"Saw him, when?"

"Yesterday. But what do you know about it, sir? Who are you? Is it quite certain that it was not suicide?"

"I am only one of the clerks, that's all," the detective answered. "Why, have you any reason to think that it may have been suicide? What cause could he have had for that?"

"No, no; I do not say that it was; I was merely surmising, for I cannot see how anybody could kill such a man as Thomas. No, no! I don't know anything about it, of course. Well, I shall never see him again, and I may as well go back home, I suppose."

The last the old man muttered to himself as he turned away, but the other laid a detaining hand upon his shoulder.

"I want to talk with you, sir," he said.

His tone was changed, and the old caller looked at him keenly, with fear plainly discernible in his eyes, and, seeing that, the detective's hand tightened its hold.

"Wh—what do you want to talk with me about?" the old man gasped.

"About the dead Mr. Stroughtenberg, sir," was the reply. "You came here yesterday and left in something of anger. Soon after you had gone Mr. Stroughtenberg came to the door and looked out, as if to recall you."

"He did that?"

"Yes, and it is plain that your interview with him was of more than ordinary importance. In fact, it may have been something that will throw light upon the mystery of his murder, if you make it known, and that is what you will have to do now. You must come with me to police headquarters—"

"No, no! My God, no! Spare me that, for it was nothing, I assure you. What we had to say to each other was just between our two selves, and concerned no one else in the world. No, no; I cannot go with you! By Heavens, I will not go with you!"

Take your hands off, young man, or, by fury, I'll make you do it if I hang for it!"

With a surprising show of strength for so old a man, the unknown shook the detective off, at the same time reaching to his hip in Western style and drawing a revolver.

But in that movement he made a mistake, evidently quite forgetting where he was, for in the same moment a dozen hands seized him, and with a quick hand the detective wrested the pistol out of his grasp. A policeman was on the spot by that time, and an explanation was demanded.

It required only for the detective to tell who he was and show his badge, and the policeman hailed a passing cab, into which the prisoner was hustled and driven off in the direction of police headquarters almost before the collecting crowd could tell what had happened or why he had been arrested.

CHAPTER VI.

BROADWAY SPORT'S RESCUER.

"Now, blast ye, what will ye do about it?"

So cried one of the ruffians, when a gag had been forced into the Broadway Sport's mouth.

The two big fellows had been holding on to his arms all the while, so that Kempton was utterly powerless to help himself, while the other two had taken care that he did not cry out.

"He won't do nothin' about it, that is what he'll do," asserted the most villainous-looking of the lot. "He has come to the end of his rope, and he might jes' as well say his prayers and git ready."

This was said in such a cool, careless way that it made the detective shiver for the instant, for the speaker was his enemy, Rummy Mike!

Kempton bitterly condemned himself for having walked into the trap, but he had not looked for it to spring in just that manner. On his guard, he had felt that he could fight through, if a trap it was.

"That's what's the matter, Mike," echoed another. "Say what's to be done with him, quick, and let's get the nasty business off our hands and get out of here. We are doin' our part, and soon's we get done we expect you to do yours. Eh, fellers?"

"That's what we do," the others growled.

"And who said anything about not doin' it?" demanded Rummy Mike. "I will do what I promised, fair enough. This ain't no time to talk about that; yous fellers fetch him along, and let's git done with him."

With that the escaped convict turned and walked back along the hall, the others following him with their prisoner.

Into the rear of the vacant saloon Rummy led the way, through a narrow passage to a little room further in the rear, and thence into a bathroom, where a small window high up in the wall gave the only light.

"Now, then, Floyd Kempton, do you know what's goin' to happen to ye?" Rummy Mike demanded, viciously.

The Broadway Sport was pale, but perfectly cool.

"How d'ye s'pose he's goin' to answer ye, wi'd d'at t'ing in his mouth?" another of the four spoke up.

"He don't have to answer," said Rummy. "I'm goin' to tell him. We are goin' to put ye into that bath-tub and drown ye like a blasted cat, that is what we are goin' to do with ye!"

"What about his ticker and his money, if he has got any?"

"I'll take care of that all right."

While the others held the sport, Rummy

Mike relieved him of his watch, money, revolver and whatever else of value he had.

"Now," he ordered, "tie his hands and into the tub with him!"

The sport's hands were quickly tied, likewise his feet, and he was thrown into the tub upon his back.

Not only so, but the water was immediately turned on, and the four ruffians bending over him, laughed in his face. He was in a desperate situation, truly, and realized it only too well.

"Mebby there is somethin' he would like to say," suggested one of the heartless rascals.

"If there is, he will have to say it in the next world," laughed Rummy Mike. "He will soon be done with this one."

"Well, come," urged another, "let's go. I don't want to stay here and see him squirm. We want that two hundred apiece, now, Rummy; our work is done."

"Ain't you afraid you won't git et?" demanded the leader of the four murderous villains. "I'll give et to ye, of course. Come on, fer he is safe enough now, and he can't git out of there."

They turned to go, when there came three loud, distinct raps upon the door in front. Their ugly faces blanched instantly.

"What's that?" gasped one.

"Tricked!" cried Rummy. "But, by jury—"

He jerked a pistol from his pocket and aimed it at Kempton, but one of the others caught his arm.

"No, you don't!" he cried. "If we are trapped, it sha'n't be as bad as that! Put it up, or we'll every one of us go back on ye, Rummy Mike!"

With an execration the leader thrust the weapon back again into his pocket, and, telling the others to save themselves if they could, he darted out the door and along the passage.

The rapping at the door became louder and more imperious, and the others saw that they were caught like rats in a trap. They looked at one another, mutely asking what was to be done.

Again the knocking, now in a way that made the windows rattle, and this aroused them to action.

"Which way out of here?" demanded one.

"Why didn't we foller Rummy?" bawled another.

"Turn off that water!" shouted a third. "We don't want to hang!"

"Fools we was to be led into et, with that promise of two hundred apiece!"

"Where would Rummy git two hundred dollars, let alone six? But, hear that! Come, fellers, we have got to git out of this!"

One of the trio had turned off the water, leaving the tub about quarter full, so that Kempton had to hold up his head to keep it out of his mouth, and all hastened out.

Just then came a crash as the front door flew open under the strong pressure of a policeman's shoulder, and a bluecoat ran into the hall, closely followed by a boy and a half a dozen or more men.

One of the rascals was starting up the stairs.

The other two were just coming out into the hall, following the first, but they drew back instantly, closing the door and securing it.

The officer ran to the door and tried to get it open, but failed, and turned and ran to the end of the hall, at the same time calling out to the men who had come in with him to guard the stairs.

At the end of the hall was a door that opened upon a very diminutive yard in the rear, and this door the officer found was unfastened. He threw it open and sprang

out, and was just in time to see a man jump a fence. To that fence the policeman ran.

Ere the officer could get up on it, however, for it was high, he heard the slam of a door, and when he got up the man was nowhere in sight. Back he went, to attend to the man on the next floor; but meanwhile Fred Fly had gone after him, backed by a couple of men, and had located the fellow on the roof, from where he refused to come down.

Lucky for the Broadway Sport, perhaps, that the water had been turned off before he was left alone.

The policeman ran up-stairs, and made no hesitation about going out on the roof, although the ruffian there, now skulking behind a chimney, threatened to shoot the first man who dared to come out.

When the policeman got through the scuttle, however, with a pistol in his grasp, the fellow came out from behind the chimney in haste, begging to be let off easy, proving plainly that he had nothing to shoot with and declaring that he was innocent of anything.

"We'll see how innocent you are," cried the officer. "Where is that man?"

"What man?"

"I'll show you what man. I mean the one who was trapped here, by the note sent to him. Where is he?"

"That must be the one those fellers had in the saloon." The prisoner still tried to play innocent. "I don't know what they done to him; I wasn't in with them in that—"

"We'll see about that," retorted the policeman, sternly. "Get down that ladder, and if you make a break to get away I will shoot a hole in you so quick that it will make your head swim. A nice nest of rascals here. Take hold of him there, gentlemen."

The policeman followed, closing the trap, and when they reached the ground floor again, Flyer Fred offered to go out the rear way and climb in at the window by which the other two had made their escape, and this he did, when soon followed the discovery of the Broadway Sport in his dangerous dilemma. As soon as released, he "went for" the prisoner to make him talk, and with threats and promises together succeeded in getting out of the fellow all he knew.

This man and his two companions had been hired by Rummy Mike to help put Kempton out of the way, and they had been promised two hundred dollars apiece. The rascal declared that he had seen the money in Rummy's possession, but how he had come by such a sum he could not say. Neither was he able to tell where Rummy could then be found. He thought it quite probable that he would not be found at all; in which Kempton was inclined to agree with him. The sport's own belief was that some one had paid Rummy Mike a large sum to put him out of the world.

CHAPTER VII.

FLYER FRED'S FIND.

The prisoner having been taken away by the policeman, Kempton made a search of the building from top to bottom, which, however, resulted in nothing.

While he searched he talked with Fred Fly, and, in spite of himself, the boy gave away the suspicion he had had, telling the detective finally all about how he had come to shadow him there—the good result of which has been set forth.

"I owe my life to you," the Broadway Sport acknowledged. "Had it not been for you I would now be dead in that bath-tub beyond a doubt. It was the most daring attempt I ever heard of in my life, and they have made good their escape, too."

"That is what they have done, all but one," Fred reminded.

"Have they?" returned the sport, grimly. "You wait and see, my boy! You will hear of their going up, unless they get in another whack at me and finish me off before I can send them there."

"Well, count on me, if I can be of any use to you in the game," said the ferret, boldly. "I mean to find out who killed Mr. Stoughtenberg, if I can do it, but it is a big puzzle. All the same, I am in it to stay, you bet!"

"You are rather young to take upon yourself such a resolve as that, are you not?" the sport remarked.

"Well, mebby I am, but I mean it. If you can make use of me, say so; if you can't, I'm going it alone and see if I can make anything out of it. That good man has got to be revenged."

"I can make use of you just now, if you will do me a favor."

"What's that?"

"Go out and hunt up a cab for me, so that I can get to my lodgings for a change of raiment, and to provide myself anew with things that have been taken from me."

"All right. I'll do that. And then what?"

"Well, look around all you can and meet me this afternoon at three at the store."

"That's a bargain. If I ain't there, you make yourself known to the old woman that sells pies there in the big doorway, and maybe she'll be able to tell you something."

"Understood."

The Flyer waved a lively adieu, and was off like a shot, and in due course of time a cab arrived.

The detective had closed the building meanwhile, and on leaving it locked the hall door, having discovered the key on the inside of the lock, and fixed the door. The key, by the way, had given him a new thought.

That thought concerned Rummy Mike. How could he have gotten hold of the key if it was the original one belonging to the door? It certainly did not have the appearance of a "made" one. Was the former proprietor of that saloon the one who had backed Rummy in the crime he had attempted?

His former surmise still held good—that some one had paid Rummy a big sum to put him out of the way, though with what object in view he could not guess, for he was just at that time working upon no case of such great importance that any one could afford to take such desperate steps to have him removed. To be sure, he had been after Rummy, but with money in hand, that worthy would have been far more apt to take flight than to turn and attack.

He was obliged to give it up.

Fred, having engaged the cab, as requested, went home.

There he told the story of what had happened, and of the determination he had formed.

His mother could hardly bear the thought of his undertaking such a task and running into possible danger, though she admired his spirit and approved of his desire.

The boy wisely kept to himself everything concerning the adventure he had already had, for that would have so alarmed his mother that she would have taken steps to prevent his running into any more such dangers. Immediately after dinner he went out.

First he walked aimlessly in the direction of the store, but, changing his mind, he set off for Mr. Stoughtenberg's residence.

He had been there many times on er-

rands, and knew all there very well, and his love for Mr. Stoughtenberg had been such that he could not bear the thought of seeing him no more or of meeting the stricken family.

Reaching the house, he found it closed, and there was a great black crape streaming from the bell-pull, at sight of which tears came to the boy's eyes, and he clinched his fists. The thought that Mr. Stoughtenberg had that morning left home in health, and was now dead, was one to arouse in him grief, anger and the desire for revenge.

Fred turned away, doubly resolved to do what he could toward finding the murderer and bringing him to justice.

He had gone but a few steps, when he came face to face with a man he knew, and who knew him, at sight. The man was one who had dealings at the store, and who had seemed to be a friend to George Stoughtenberg.

"Hello, boy!" was exclaimed. He stopped, Fred doing the same.

"How do you do, Mr. Allen?"

"Where are you going? Have you just come from Stoughtenberg's?"

"I haven't been in the house, sir," answered Fred. "I was going down town again. Why?"

"Would you mind going to the house for me with a message for Mr. George Stoughtenberg? It is something important, and I don't really want to go myself."

"Yes, sir. I'll go."

"Very well. Say to him that Mr. Allen wants to see him this afternoon not later than three o'clock. Tell him I will be near the store at that time, and he must come there."

"I will tell him, sir."

"All right. Here's a quarter for your trouble."

The Flyer retraced his steps to the house, where he paused in doubt about ringing the bell.

While he hesitated the door opened, and the butler asked him what he wanted, or whom he desired to see, and when Fred stated his errand he was asked to step into the hall.

In a few minutes George Stoughtenberg came out to him.

"What is it, Fred?" he asked.

"Mr. Frank Allen sent me to—"

"Frank Allen! My God! Has he no feeling? What did he say?"

The man had paled instantly at mention of the name, and a scowl immediately came upon his face.

"He said he must see you this afternoon not later than three o'clock, sir, and that he would be near the store at that hour, and you must come there. That was all."

"Must come! Did he say must?"

"Yes, sir."

George Stoughtenberg's fists clinched, and a baneful light gleamed in his eyes.

"Curse the fellow!" he hissed, in undertone, but Fred caught the words plainly enough. "He thinks he has got me now, but I'll show him that he hasn't! Are you going back to him, boy?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't he require an answer?"

"No, sir; he only sent the message, that was all. I don't know where he is now."

"And orders me to do his bidding, does he? By Heavens, but— However, I will see him, and then we'll see whose hand is the strongest. Was there something more, Fred?"

"Could I see poor Mr. Stoughtenberg, sir?"

"Yes, certainly. Poor father! we never thought he would come to such an end, Fred."

"No, sir. I hope we'll soon find out who did it, sir, and we'll make him sweat when

we do, won't we? I am going to do all I can to find him, sir."

"Yes, do everything you can, Fred, if there is anything you can do," the son encouraged. "It is a mystery that must be cleared up, and no matter who does it, so long as the guilty one is brought to the punishment he deserves. Come this way, my boy."

When Fred had taken a long look at the peaceful face of his dead benefactor, he went sorrowfully from the house. His next business was to keep his appointment with the Broadway Sport.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO OF A KIND AND A JOB.

When Rummy Mike made good his escape from the house in which he had attempted the murder of the Broadway Sport, he lost no time in getting out of that neighborhood.

Escaping by a rear way, and out upon another street than that upon which the saloon faced, he had a fair chance, and got away without having been seen by any one who would dare to interfere to stop him, even if there had been any suspicion against him.

Twenty minutes later saw him enter another saloon.

There a man was impatiently pacing the floor, biting his mustache and looking eagerly up when any one entered.

Upon the entrance of Rummy Mike he stepped forward eagerly, took Mike by the arm and drew him down into a seat by a table. His face wore an expression of concern.

"Is it too late to recall that order, Mike?" he whispered.

"What order?" the escaped convict demanded. "If you mean about Floyd Kempton, it is."

"Heavens! I feared it would be."

"And now I want the rest of the two thousand that you promised me for the job," said Rummy, holding out his hand.

"I haven't got it."

"The mischief, you haven't got it! Then you had better be getting it in a mighty hurry, I warn you."

"You see, Mike, it was like this: Right after I had seen you the man came in a hurry to me and wanted to call off, saying that it didn't matter after all about putting Kempton out of the way."

"That don't help it any; he is out of the way, hard enough, accordin' to 'greement, and I want the rest of the money. See? If you didn't git it from him, you just tell me who he is and see if I don't bring him to time. I didn't take hold of that thing fer fun!"

"Don't get roiled, Mike; you got in a stroke for yourself at the same time, anyhow."

"That be blowed! This is a skin game, that is what it is; you are trying to do me out of that extra thousand, Hen Gardner, but you can't do it, and don't you forget it!"

"No; it is just as I tell you, Mike."

"Then pay me."

"I would if I could, but I haven't got the money. The man didn't pay me the balance when he recalled the order."

"I don't believe there was any other man. See? You are the one, and now that you find the job has been done you want to worm out of paying the money. I mean to have what's due me. See?"

"I swear that I am dealing square with you, Mike—"

"No, I be hanged if you are. If you are, tell me who that man is so that I can go for him."

"I can't do that, Mike. He has got a hold on me so that I can't blow out on him. You ought to know that. Do you

suppose he would trust me with such a job if he hadn't?"

"The same as you trusted me, hey? You think because I am out on leg bail that you have got a cinch on me and I don't dare to holler. If you don't come down with that extra thousand this minute—"

"Great Scott! I haven't got a thousand cents about me, Mike. You have got to be reasonable. Anyhow, you will have to wait till I can see that fellow again—"

"Not a wait! Do you hear? Not a wait! I want that money now, right now, or I'll make trouble."

"Sh! Not so loud."

"I don't care how loud I talk. If you want it blowed out, might as well be here as anywhere else. See?"

This in a still louder tone, and some of those present turned to look at the speaker, and the anxious man laid a hand on his arm and ordered him again to be quiet.

"Then pay me what was promised," growled Mike.

"I tell you I can't do it, not till I see him. Give me one day, and I'll have it for you."

"I want it right now. You take me to him, and I guess he will be glad to come to time. I have done my part, and I want to get out of here as soon as I can do it."

"Haven't I told you why I can't do that? But what proof have you got to show me that you have done the job?"

"What proof? Do you want me to show you right here and now?"

"No, no; tell me."

"Well, I have got his popper, his watch, his bracelets, and everything he had about him. That's all I have got, though."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I had to pay my helpers big, and that has about strapped me. You ain't dealin' fair with me, Hen Gardner."

"And I tell you it is not my fault. You seem determined not to understand the situation as it is. If I could have got word to you in time, there would be nothing to pay, would there?"

"Well, no, I s'pose not."

"Very well. The man thought that I could stop you, and hence he did not give me the balance."

"He had no business to suppose anything about it. A bargain is a bargain, and he'd orter had the money in your hands when that bargain was made. I didn't expect to have to wait."

"Well, he would want proof anyhow, before he paid it over. I have got to take him proof that the work is done."

"Then take him right to the saloon and show him the job."

"You didn't do it there!"

"Why not?"

"Why, man, that will fasten it right on me, if the body is found there!"

"All right; so much the better for me, then. But you get me that thousand before night, and I will take care that the body is got away with before another sun-up."

"I'll do it, if possible. Give me the proof— But not here; let's go into the back room."

Gardner arose and led the way, and they passed into a rear room.

Here Rummy Mike disclosed the articles he had taken from the detective he claimed to have murdered, yet knew he had not.

"Are ye satisfied?" he demanded.

"Yes, I can't ask anything more," was the response. "I'll show these things to him, and he'll pay the money."

"Maybe he will. If he don't, you have got to, and no fooling about it. I will give you until ten o'clock to-night, when I'll meet you here, and if the money ain't forthcomin', look out!"

It was a strange game, truly.

"No, you must give me until this time

to-morrow, at least, for I am not certain that I can find my man so soon."

"Not another minute! Do you understand? Ten o'clock to-night, right here in this room, and you have got to have the money with you. I don't care how you get it."

"Well, I'll try my best. I'll meet you here at that time, anyhow. But you say you had men to help you?"

"Sure."

"And did you let them see my hand in it?"

"Say, think I'm a fool? No, they think it is my own job, 'cause the sport has been houndin' me."

"Well, let them think that. But you say you have paid them, so they are out of it. The main thing for you now is to lie low and keep out of sight till you get the money."

"I'll hang around here. Nobody will think to look for me here, it ain't likely—in fact, the Broadway Sport was the only one I had to fear."

"Well, I will meet you here at the appointed time with the money to square up."

"Yes; don't you dare to come without that."

They parted company, and Gardner left the place, Rummy Mike looking after him with an expression that was made up of a commingled scowl and leer. He knew that he was upon dangerous ground, and yet he could not resist the temptation to risk all for the sake of that extra thousand, if he could get it.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT SECRET THIS?

"Hello, Frau Reizenstein! How is the pie trade?"

So the Flyer exclaimed when he came to the store and approached the pie-woman's stall.

"Es ist nicht sehr gut," the old woman responded, speaking in her native tongue, knowing that Fred had a smattering of the language, thanks to her teaching at odd moments.

"Not very good, eh? Well, that is bad, but that is to be explained on the ground that the store is closed. Paddy Gallagher is not here to-day to help you out, to say nothing of the rest of us who buy of you occasionally. I'll try a piece of that one, gute Frau."

The old woman cut a piece of the pie indicated, while she rejoined to the boy's remarks, and Fred dropped a nickel in her hand and set about munching the pie forthwith.

"Did you know ein man vas arrested peen?" the old woman asked.

"Man arrested?" echoed the Flyer, his mouth full.

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas so."

"Who was it?"

The old woman told him all about the arrest that had been made, Fred listening in wonder.

"Whew!" the boy whistled, when he had heard all. "This will be news for the Broadway Sport when he comes, sure enough. Wonder who the old fellow was? It will be for us to find out."

"Unt who vas dot?" inquired the pie-woman.

"Who is who?"

"Der sfort."

"Oh, he is—he is a man that had business with Mr. Stoughtenberg this morning, and is trying to find out what was wanted of him."

"Vell, vell; id vas creat peesness, anyway. I wonder me who id vas did kill der poor oldt man, anyhow? I pet you id vas nefer find outd, Meester Fred, but id be creat mystery always."

So ran their conversation, until the Fly-

er, catching sight of the Broadway Sport coming, said a hasty adieu to the pie-woman and went to meet him.

"Well, anything to report?" Kempton asked.

"The police have made one arrest—"

"The old man? Yes, I know about that, and he is a puzzle to them, too. They cannot get a word out of him, not even his name; he absolutely refuses to talk."

"Do they think he is the right man? Do they think he is the one that did the murder?"

"No; they are satisfied that he did not do it, and that is what puzzles them. They mean to hold him, though, until he does talk, or until they can learn something about him."

"Something queer about him, sure enough. But there is something else that is queer, and I don't know whether I ought to tell you about it or not. If it wasn't that we are both workin' together I wouldn't, but as it is I think you'd ought to know."

"Why have you doubts about telling me?"

"Because I don't want you to look suspicious at George Stoughtenberg."

"Ha!" and the secret detective's face took on a grim expression instantly.

"You don't think he is guilty, do you?" Fred hastened to inquire. "I hope you don't; it is impossible that he can be, loving his father as he did; but—"

"But what?"

"You won't get him into trouble, will you?"

"Why, certainly not, if he is innocent; and, as you say, he must be innocent. Out with it!"

"Well, a man named Frank Allen has ordered him to be here at the store at three o'clock to meet him, and for some reason George did not dare refuse to come. I'll tell you all about it."

Before the young shadower had time to finish, however, he caught sight of Allen and pointed him out, and barely had he done that when George Stoughtenberg was seen coming down the street, on the opposite side, and the two men met, both looking serious.

"Boy," said the Broadway Sport, "we must hear what these two men have to say to each other."

"I don't know how we are going to do it."

"We have got to do it. It may be the means of clearing George Stoughtenberg from suspicion, if suspicion falls his way. Go ahead and see how near you can get to them."

"All right."

"And if they discover you, then I must try them. Be sure to remember everything you hear."

This was something the Flyer did not like to do, but if it was with the idea of saving George Stoughtenberg from suspicion, he was ready for the task.

Meantime, the two men had greeted.

"Well?" George Stoughtenberg had demanded, on coming up.

"I see you are here," sneered the other. "I knew you would not dare to refuse."

"Do not be so boastful," and something in George's tone gave warning. "The wonder to me is that you had the nerve to send for me after what has happened."

"The nerve? What nerve did it require?"

They had stepped just around a corner, out of the stream of people, and just there stood several empty packing cases.

"A good deal, I should think. What if I tell that you had good cause to hate my father, from your point of view, and that you were at the store yesterday upon an unsuccessful errand; what then?"

The other laughed. Just then a boyish

figure dodged behind the packing cases and into one of them, where he could not fail of hearing what was said, if the men spoke in natural tones.

"Why, are you a fool, George Stroughtenberg?" Allen demanded. "If you so much as open your lips I will tell what I know, and then how would it look for you? Don't get crabbed, now."

"Curse you, you are no man, to take advantage of me by means of a secret you have no business to know, and which you learned, Heaven only knows how. And, worst of all, at such a time as this. Why could you not wait?"

"Strike when the iron is hot, old fellow," was the taunting response. "The iron is hot, and hence I must get in my lick. See?"

"Well, curse you, what do you want me to do?"

"I want five thousand dollars spot cash—in fact, I have got to have it."

"Five thousand dollars! Good Heavens! Would you ruin me? Yesterday you only wanted twenty-five hundred to tide you over. What do you mean?"

"I mean business, from the word 'Go.' That is the sum of money I want, and you have got to give it to me—understand what I say, you have got to give it to me. On that condition I will let you off."

"But how am I to raise it?"

"Give me your check; that will do. I will cash it right in, and you can destroy it the minute it gets back into your hands."

"Yes, but I have not got that amount to my own credit anywhere, and I cannot draw one of our business checks and keep it from being known. Besides, you would not dare to handle it if I were to draw it."

"Don't you fool yourself about that. Come, I do not care how you do it, but I have got to have the money, and that at once—before the banks close. We haven't got all day left. Or, if you have got that much in cash in the store, all the better."

"In God's name, Frank, wait a week, till I can do it in the course of regular business—"

"Not an hour—not half an hour! I want it now!"

"By Heavens, you shall not have it! Do your worst; I defy you! Maybe it was for refusing a similar demand that you killed my father."

"What? You dare to insinuate that I did that deed? By Heavens, you had better have a care, George Stroughtenberg! You were the last one in the office, and if you did not do it yourself, you know who did."

"And what if I swear that you are the man?"

A muttered curse was the response.

CHAPTER X.

FLYER AND SPORT HAVE A BREAK.

Flyer Fred was by this time so excited that he could hardly contain himself.

What he had heard thus far had given him grave concern for George Stroughtenberg's innocence, and yet he was most unwilling to believe him guilty. That was simply incredible—impossible!

The boy recalled many an incident that went to prove the affection George had for his father, and, come what might, he would still believe him innocent. Nevertheless, he had concern for what others would think, if this became known, and almost regretted what he had told the detective.

This, to the time when George Stroughtenberg gave voice to the words last quoted, and Allen responded with the muttered curse.

Of the two, Fred had rather believe Allen the guilty man.

Allen's curse was followed almost im-

mediately by a light laugh, as if a new thought had struck him.

"You have fired just one shot too many, George Stroughtenberg," he declared, exultingly. "You have as good as admitted that you know who killed your father, and—"

"Nothing of the kind!" interrupted George. "You insinuated that I knew, and I merely asked you what would be the result if I were to swear that you are the man. And I ask you again, what if I swear that you are the man who killed my father? What if I swear that I saw you do it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Worse and worse! Why did you not denounce me on the spot and arrest me, if you saw me do the deed? That would be the first question asked of you, sir. What would you say to that? And then, when I came up with an alibi, where would you stand?"

"Can you prove that you were not at the store this morning?"

"Of course I can prove it."

"Well, if you did not do the deed yourself, you may be the one who caused it to be done, and it will be just as well for you to keep entirely out of sight in the matter."

"I care not whether I am out of sight or in sight. You have found that your little scare did not work, I guess. Now, I am more than ever convinced that you yourself know more about your father's taking off than you are willing to tell, and if you want to keep my lips closed, come down with the money."

"I swear that I know nothing about it. Would to God that I did know!"

"Yet it might be hard to prove that you do not know."

"Harder for any one to prove that I do know. You know in your heart that I would not have raised a finger against my father. I loved him too well. As to murder—I am no murderer!"

"I hope you are not, certainly, but will a jury think so when they know what was between you and your father? Come, now, you had better think twice before you turn me away. Come down with the sum I have asked for, and I'll swear that black is white to get you out of any trouble you may get into."

"I am not afraid of any trouble; but what you know—that must be kept secret at any cost. But, Frank, how am I to raise the money? That is impossible at a moment's notice."

"What if I give you until noon to-morrow?"

"If you will do that I will make an effort to get it for you, but it must be on condition."

"I do not know whether it must or not. That will be as I say, George Stroughtenberg. Don't forget that I hold the trump card, not you. However, you may name the condition."

"That this is to be the last—that you will never push me with the same stick again. If you do—"

"What if I do?"

"Well, there will be a way to beat you. A confession from me would balk you, and I would make it—I swear that I will make it, if you ever try to force me to pay you another penny!"

"Why not make it now?"

"There is trouble enough for the time being, God knows."

"I agree with you. As to the condition, I will not agree to it; but I will agree not to come to you again unless actually forced to do it to keep from sinking. So rest easy; if it ever comes up again I will give you due notice to prepare, and not take you short."

"And you remember what I have threatened. It is no idle threat."

"This isn't business. You will meet me at noon to-morrow?"

"As I have promised; or you can call—"

"No, thank you. You can slip away for half an hour, and I will meet you at the Hoffman House."

"No. I am too well known there, and such a transaction, if witnessed, would only start idle tongues to wagging, and no telling where the matter would fetch up."

"Where then?"

A place was named and agreed upon, and they prepared to part company as coldly as they had met.

Fred Fly waited only a moment after, when he came forth from his place of temporary hiding, and he was no sooner out that he was joined by the Broadway Sport, who had been watching.

"Come, boy," the sport said, "hurry and say which one we are to follow."

"We'll follow Frank Allen," decided Fred, on the spur of the moment. "I know Mr. Stroughtenberg is innocent."

"You know he is, eh? What was it Allen got the best of him on, then? Mind, I am not saying that he is guilty, you know; I do not believe he is, but there is something wrong."

"And you will help me to prove him innocent?"

"Ha! I thought so."

"Thought what?"

"That there is danger that he may be accused of the crime."

"No, no; I didn't mean that," the boy hastily declared. "Allen knows some secret of his that he threatens to tell, though."

"Oh, that is it, eh? Come, tell me everything as we go along, and if our man happens to turn around, put you head down quick so that he will not get a look at your face."

Fred saw it was the only thing he could do.

And, feeling certain of George Stroughtenberg's innocence, he thought the better way was to tell the whole story.

This, accordingly, he did, and the Broadway Sport listened with interest to the end. At the same time they were keeping Allen in sight, though now the detective saw no real reason for doing so.

"Why did you say we should follow Allen?" he demanded.

"Because I wanted you to leave Mr. Stroughtenberg alone," was the sturdy reply.

"You are doing an unwise thing, Fred, not to trust me," the detective reprimanded. "I am as friendly to George Stroughtenberg as you are."

"Well, I won't do it again."

"You had better not, for another reason: This is a serious business, and if you learn anything and hold it back, and it is found out, that might be the means of getting you into trouble."

"Well, I am new at the business, you see."

"You are keen, nevertheless, Frederick, boy; and may be able to learn something yet that will throw light on the mystery. We had better part now, for the present."

"What for?"

"Because I want to have a chat with Allen, and as Allen knows you, I do not wish you to be with me. You had better go back to the store and start on another trail, if you can strike one. If you learn anything, come to my office at nine in the morning."

Fred stopped, but did not respond, and after looking at the sport for a moment, waved adieu and wheeled around, leaving him to go on his way alone as he desired to do.

"That dog is dead, clean gone dead!" the Flyer exclaimed to himself. "I see

through him. He is using me, but he can't use me any more in the same fashion, not if I know it. I am going it alone now, and we'll see where I'll bring up. I am afraid he does suspect George, after all. If so, I must be flyer than ever to prevent any injury to him."

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE TWO TRAILS CONVERGE.

Needless to say, Fred had guessed the truth; the Broadway Sport had been making use of him, but not without owing to Fred his helpfulness.

That the boy had been useful could not be denied, and it was that, perhaps, that piqued the Flyer more than anything else; hence his resolve to "go it alone."

However, Fred should have reasoned it out further, and seen that the request which the detective had made was right and proper. He could deal with the man Allen, while Fred, known to him, could have done nothing. Then it was not natural for a detective to transfer his work to a boy.

Fred, however, saw it from his own standpoint only, and felt not a little chagrined.

"To think that I saved his life," he said to himself, "and then for him to turn me off like this when he got out of me all I knew. But he won't do it again. I'll go straight and see George Stroughtenberg."

Having come to this decision, he laid his course for the Stroughtenberg residence.

Arriving there, he was admitted as before.

His inquiry for Mr. George Stroughtenberg, however, gave him the information that he was not at home.

This contingency, nevertheless, Fred had thought of, and was prepared to say that he would wait until he arrived; but he was not prepared for the information that George was not expected back until night.

"Why, where has he gone?" the boy asked.

"Do you want to see him for anything important?" the butler demanded.

"It is just so important that the sooner I see him the better," was the Fly Ferret's rejoinder.

"If that is the case, I suppose I had better tell you, though you must not tell any one else, for Mr. Stroughtenberg does not want it known."

Fred felt a chill pass over him.

Why all this secrecy? After all, was George Stroughtenberg in some measure responsible for his father's death?

Against that, however, the faithful boy grimly closed his mind. He would not entertain the ignoble thought for a moment. He believed his dead master's son innocent; it was his business to prove him so.

"I won't tell, of course," Fred assured. "All I want is to find him, and the sooner the better, as I told you before."

"If I didn't know you, boy, you would have to give me better proof than your word, but as it is it is different. Fred Fly is to be trusted anywhere; I have heard poor Mr. Stroughtenberg say that more than once. Mr. George has gone to Mount Vernon."

"To Mount Vernon?" the ferret echoed. "Yes, why not?"

Where Fred had seen him certainly was not Mount Vernon!

"No reason why not, I suppose," Fred responded, "but how am I going to reach him there? That is what sticks me."

"You can telegraph. A message sent to the — Hotel will reach him all right. That was the way he told me to reach him if anything of unusual importance turned up."

"Yes, but this story of mine is too long for telegraph. I'll have to go there; don't see any other way."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No; but that doesn't make any difference. If the place is there I can find it. If I should miss him, I will come here again, so you can tell him that."

"All right."

Fred took leave and made all haste to the Grand Central Station, where he discovered he had arrived just in time for a train.

He bought a ticket, happening to have some money, and made haste out to the shed from which the trains take their departure, and having discovered his train, hastened to get aboard.

He had just put his foot on the step and taken hold of the rail, when a hand fell upon his shoulder.

Fred looked around quickly, and found the Broadway Sport.

"Where are you going, Fred?" the detective inquired, rather sharply. "How came you here?"

"What difference can it make to you where I am going?" Fred demanded. "You told me to start on another trail, and maybe I am doing that; I won't say. I might ask you what you are doing here."

"And I will tell you if you will answer a few questions truthfully, my boy."

"I am not in the habit of answering questions any other way, when I answer them at all," was the rejoinder.

"Well, what are you doing here, then?"

"Taking a train."

"Where are you going?"

"That doesn't matter, does it?"

"Where did you go after leaving me?"

"I guess that does not matter, either, does it?"

"Fred, there is no use our working to cross purposes; tell me right out where you are going, and what you are going for."

"Can't do it. You said a while ago that we had better part for the present, and we parted for good. If you want to know where I am going, you will have to come along and see."

"Suppose I take you at your word, what then?"

"Then I'll stay at home."

"Now, Fred, you are playing the mule just a little bit. Shall I tell you where you are going and what you are going for? You are a cute one, I have to admit, whether I would or not."

"Tell me if you can— But here goes the train. Tra-la!"

"No, we won't part this time," said the sport, with a smile, swinging on board immediately behind Fred.

"Then you mean to follow me?"

"No; we happen to be going to the same place, that is all. But is it possible that I am mistaken? You did not leave me when I told you to, I take it, but followed Allen, and so came here—that was it, eh?"

Fred saw as quick as a wink just how the situation stood.

The detective did not know that George Stroughtenberg had gone to Mount Vernon, evidently.

And, quick-witted, he was quick enough to accept the situation, and so conceal what he knew about the matter. At the same time he was puzzled to know why both men were going there. However, he had not yet heard the detective say to what place Allen was going.

"How did you guess that?" Fred instantly demanded, pretending surprise.

"It was easy enough to guess," was the rejoinder. "But I am not positive that my guess is correct."

They entered the car while speaking, and the detective, finding seats together, they sat down. Fred had looked around

to find Stroughtenberg, but failed to discover him.

"Now, what place are you going to?" the detective asked.

"Same place you are going to," was the prompt answer.

"Mount Vernon?"

"Exactly."

"Well, answer me a question, will you? How did you know the man was going to Mount Vernon?"

"How did you know it yourself? If you are a detective, don't imagine that nobody else can play at the same game, for they can. I played it good enough to save your life."

"Which I shall not forget, my boy, and if you will be more agreeable we shall get along better."

"And let you use me to scare up game for you, eh?"

"What more can you ask, as a boy? You are not big enough to take the birds after they are put up, are you? We must pull together, Fred, since you are determined to stick to me—"

"But I ain't stickin' to ye—"

"Ha! I thought my guess was a poor one. You are on another lay entirely, I see. It must be that a pal of Allen's has come this way, and you are after him. Fred, we must have an earnest talk about these matters."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY OF MOUNT VERNON.

Fred Fly felt chagrined.

He found that he was not a match for the trained detective.

If he talked at all, he believed that the detective would soon have it all out of him in spite of himself.

"Seems to me you don't know how you want to guess," Fred responded, determined to puzzle the sport if he could. "At any rate, you don't stick to the guess you first made."

"Because you have admitted that you are not sticking to me. I thought it funny that you could know where the man was going, when you came out to the train ahead of him. You bought your ticket first, if you have got one, and I suppose you have."

"Then it is you sticking to me," laughed Fred. "Anyhow, if we are both going to Mount Vernon we must both be going on the same business, and that is all there is of it. But, maybe you will want it all to yourself again, and if so I might as well go back the first time the train stops. Allen will get onto us, sure. I'll tell you one thing."

"What's that?"

"I am working on my own hook, now."

"And you mean to follow Allen anyhow, eh? Well, I am sorry we have fallen out, Fred."

"So am I, but as we don't think alike I don't see that we can do any good working together, do you? You believe George Stroughtenberg guilty, and I don't, that is the difference."

"You wrong me, Fred. I am going to prove his innocence."

"So am I; no use talking longer about it."

Fred closed up at that, and while the detective continued talking right along, Fred would say nothing that could be twisted into meaning anything beyond the one suspicion that the sport had already discovered.

Just then Fred held the best hand.

On arriving at Mount Vernon, Fred expressed his intention of giving it up to the detective, saying he would remain out of sight at the station.

Kempton gave him a keen look, but had no time then to argue the matter with him further, for his man had gotten out of an-

other car and was hastening off in the crowd, and he had to follow or lose him.

Fred watched him turn around the corner of the station and disappear, and at once set about looking for some one of whom he could inquire the way to the — Hotel, when whom should he see but George Stroughtenberg himself coming along up the platform, having got out of a rear car.

The moment the man caught sight of the boy he gave a start.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Came to see you," was the prompt answer.

"How did you know that I was coming here?"

Fred explained that part of it quickly, and got down immediately to the meat of the matter.

"I came to give you warning of something that I happen to know," he said. "My playing detective has worked the wrong way, and I want to undo whatever I have done wrong."

"Fred, you amaze me. What are you driving at?"

"Do you know that detective has his eyes on you as the possible murderer?"

George Stroughtenberg paled to the lips.

"If he has, he is wrong," he said. "Tell me whatever you know, Fred, and I may be able to set him right."

"Well, I first had a suspicion of him, and followed him this morning; but I soon found out that he was a detective, and had the good luck to save his life for him."

"Go on."

"Well, he is too deep for me. He has made use of me; the first I knew I had given him a pointer that pointed at you, and he is now making use of that, or trying to. Not that he believes you are guilty, he says, but it is the way to clear you."

"What was the pointer?"

Fred thereupon told George of the matter between him and Allen, as it was known to the detective, George listening eagerly and biting his mustache.

"Well, if you did any wrong, you did it in a good cause, my boy," said he, "and if you were smart enough to do that much you are smart enough to do more. Your setting out to follow me here proves that you are in earnest in trying to help me."

"I am, sir, for I don't believe you had anything to do with the awful crime."

"Fred, I no more killed my father than you did, nor do I know who did it. Did I know, not long would he be out of jail. This other matter is something entirely different."

"I believe you, sir, and I'm on your side to the end, no matter what comes up."

"Thank you, Fred. You had better return to the city now, for you can do no good here. The business that has brought me here is something that is quite private."

"Say, do you know Allen is here?"

"Allen here?"

"Yes."

"Why, no. What is he doing here?"

"That is what the Broadway Sport wants to find out, for he has followed him."

"You have told me something of interest now, Fred, sure enough. You have done me a great service, too. What has brought him here I cannot imagine, but that it is for some object to work injury to me I believe."

"Can't I find out for you, boss?"

"Let me think."

For some minutes Stroughtenberg was silent and thoughtful, and at last he shook his head.

"After all, it may be only a coincidence, his coming here. He may live here, for all

that I know to the contrary. But his coming immediately after parting from me looks suspicious."

"If there is anything that I can do, boss, you have only to say the word."

"I know it, Fred. Father had the greatest faith in you, and so have I, but just now I do not see what is to be done. One thing, I must attend to the business that brought me here."

"Maybe that is what brought Allen here, boss; maybe he came to attend to it for you."

Stroughtenberg gave a start.

"What do you know about the matter?" he demanded.

"Not a thing more than I have told you, sir; but that fellow may know more."

"Fred, that is a thought that would not have come to me. Maybe there is something wrong; you have given me an idea. Come, we will take a cab and find out."

A cab was soon had, and after giving some whispered directions to the driver, Stroughtenberg got in, Fred having already done so.

"Now for it," said George as the cab started.

"What is going to be done?" Fred inquired. "Going to be a scrimmage?"

"Oh, no; but we'll see whether Allen is here to attend to any of my business for me or not."

Little was said, and after a time the cab entered a quiet by-street and came to a stop. Fred and Mr. Stroughtenberg looked out from behind the curtain, and the first person to catch Fred's eye was the Broadway Sport.

He was standing by a huge tree, looking up the street as if watching some one, and Fred knew at once which way to look to find Allen, if he was in sight. Stroughtenberg, meantime, was watching a house some distance off, and thus they remained for a time.

Finally the door of that house opened and Allen came forth, stepping out at a brisk pace up the street. The Broadway Sport was after him straightway, and as soon as they had passed the corner Mr. Stroughtenberg gave his driver a signal and the cab turned and rattled away to the station again, where it was just in the nick of time to connect with a train for the city. Allen and his shadower had not yet reached the station.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUMMY GETS A CINCH.

At the time when Hen Gardner left the saloon, as mentioned, Rummy Mike was not long behind him.

Rummy was determined to get to the bottom of the matter if he could, and he knew of but one way to do it, and that was to follow Gardner and find out who his principal was.

Accordingly, giving Gardner some start, he slouched along after him, taking care not to run chances of being discovered if he could help it. He took advantage of every shelter that offered, yet did not lose sight of his man entirely at any time.

Gardner led him a long distance to another part of the town.

There he entered a worse-looking den than the one from which he had just come.

Rummy Mike hesitated about following him at once, until he had time to make a little preparation for the venture, for he did not want to be recognized.

An accomplished crook, an escaped convict evading the officers at every turn, he was not without some means of disguise, as occasion required, and in a few minutes he had altered his appearance somewhat.

That done, he entered.

He did not go in by the front way, as Gardner had done, but by a side door.

Looking around the place, he soon discovered the man he had followed there, sitting at a table with another man, his face toward the front entrance, and the two were talking.

What a revelation this would have been for Fred Fly, could he have seen them!

Rummy Mike did not know the man.

Stepping to the bar, Rummy called for a bottle of something he liked, and, paying for it, took bottle and glass and sat down quietly at a table.

The place he had chosen was directly behind Gardner and the other man, and they would have to talk in low tones indeed if he did not overhear at least a portion of what was said between them.

Neither of them gave him any attention.

"Too bad that it was too late," he heard the stranger saying, "but I shall not cry about it, now that it is done."

"No use," said Gardner.

"You are sure it was done, are you?"

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that; I have got his watch and things here in my pockets, if you want to see them."

"No, no! Not for the world!" and the man looked nervously around. He saw Rummy, but that worthy was bending low over his drink just at the moment, and no suspicion could attach to him.

"Then you will pay the extra amount?"

"I'll have to; no way out of it. That was the original agreement, you know."

"Yes; but I thought maybe you might want to get out of it, after the thing was done, seeing that you have got a hold on me."

"No, not in a thing of this kind, for this will balance our account, you see, and neither of us will have an advantage. Both must observe our agreement to the letter."

"That's right."

"No other way will do."

"That's so, that's so. I understand."

"And you are dealing perfectly square with your tool?"

"Dead square, you bet. He wants his money, and I am to pay it to him tonight."

"Well, I'll hand it over to you now. No one will know what I am paying you for, of course. There, I believe that is the sum. Count it."

"No; I'll take your word for it," said Gardner, shoving the money into his pocket quickly, looking around to see if any one was looking at him. "You have got no call to cheat me."

"Then that settles our business."

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"And it will never be known that anything has been transacted between us? That is, if you keep your share of the secret. If you do not, by Heaven! you will go up!"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid to trust me; we are both in the same boat, now, you see."

They shook hands and arose from the table.

Taking something at the bar, they passed out of the place, and when they had gone Rummy was out like a shot by the side door.

He cared nothing further for Gardner now; the man he was after was the stranger. He wanted to learn who he was, for it might prove a gold mine of knowledge for the future.

Rummy saw the two men separate, one going in one direction and the other another, and he followed the one in whom he had most interest. He would see Mr. Gardner later, when there would be a time of reckoning with him. Rummy felt that he held the whip now.

The stranger presently took a car. Rummy doing the same, and ere long they were in a better quarter of the city.

When the stranger left the car Rummy still kept him in sight, but he was forced to the conclusion that he was no detective, for how was he to learn the man's name?

"Blame me if I know how to do that trick!" the cutthroat said to himself. "A detective could do it, somehow, but hang me if I can. I don't know how to go about it, that's what's the matter. I bet it wouldn't long puzzle a feller like Broadway Sport!"

Think hard as he would, he could devise no scheme by which to accomplish the desired end.

Presently the man ran up the steps of a house and entered.

He let himself in with a key.

"That settles it," said Rummy to himself. "That is where he lives, or he wouldn't be letting himself in that way. It will keep now, and I can find out his name some time later on. Mebby I'll make it convenient to pay him a visit in the near future to introduce myself. I can see about as far through a plank as the next one."

Chuckles to himself, the rascal sought his former place of hiding, to await the coming of Gardner.

He did not have to wait till the appointed hour.

Having nothing else to do, Gardner put in his appearance much earlier, feeling tolerably certain of finding Rummy there, and, if not, it was as good a place as any in which to kill time.

"Well, what is the word?" Rummy greeted him.

"Only half good," was the answer.

"How is that?"

"Well, you see it is like this: The man said that as he had recalled the order he would only pay half. I have brought that with me, and you will have to be satisfied with it. It was the best I could do."

"You are trying to do pretty well, I admit."

"What do you mean?"

"How much do you intend to pay me?"

"It is five hundred, and you ought to be glad to get that."

"Hand it over."

Gardner took a roll of bills from his pocket and placed it in Rummy's hand, and it quickly disappeared.

"Now," said Rummy, "I will take the other five hundred, if you please, and a hundred on top of that for good measure. There is no chance to get out of it; I am up to your game."

Gardner paled.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Just what I say. Fork over six hundred dollars more."

"But, I—"

"No use your lying, Hen Gardner; wasn't I there? Didn't I see him pay you the money? I tell you you can't get out of it—"

"Man, you are crazy! If I had got the full amount don't you suppose that I would be glad enough to pay it over to you? You and I can't afford to fall out, Rummy."

"Yes, we can, too, well enough," declared Rummy. "You have tried the wrong game with me, Hen Gardner. I am on to the big fellow now, and can deal with him myself. Oh! you can stare, but it is the fact," and it did not take Rummy a great while to convince him of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED ARREST.

When Frank Allen reached New York, after his visit to Mount Vernon, he was passing out of the station when a hand fell upon his shoulder.

Turning, he found himself confronted by a keen-looking man with black mustache, who looked at him in a cold, grim fashion

that made Mr. Allen turn pale in spite of all effort.

"Well, now I want to know all about it, Mr. Allen," said the stranger.

"You want to know all about what?" was the haughty demand. "Who and what are you, sir?"

"My name is Kempton, and I happen to be a detective. I have had my eye on you for some hours, and now I want a full explanation of it all. Do not make a scene."

Allen took the hint, and they moved off together.

"You may be a detective all right," he said, "but I know of no reason why you should be paying your attention to me."

"Then I must enlighten you. I am after the murderer of Mr. Thomas Stroughtenberg, and I am convinced that you know something about that crime. Now, what do you know?"

"Not a thing."

"You mean that you will not tell. A berth in the cooler may lead you to change your mind about that."

"Good Heavens! you would not arrest me?"

"Consider yourself under arrest now, sir, until you can satisfy me of a mistake."

"You never made a bigger mistake in your life, sir. I know nothing about that crime, any more than is known to the public generally, and I demand my instant liberty!"

"Do not cut up, now, or I shall be obliged to be rough with you. If you want this thing kept quiet, just make a clean breast of it all, and if I am then convinced that you have told me the truth, why there's an end of it. See?"

"But there is nothing that I can tell."

"Oh, yes, there is."

"What?"

"You can tell me what the secret is between you and George Stroughtenberg, and what business took you to Mount Vernon. That is something I want to know, something I am determined to know."

"You will never learn through me."

"Yes, I shall."

"I defy you. It is something private, has nothing whatever to do with the other matter you are looking into, and I will never tell!"

"Then I'll have to put you down below while I investigate. The suspicion is sufficient upon which to hold you, and I have clew enough to work upon to get at the bottom of it."

"Will you not take my word for it that it is nothing concerning the case you are on?"

"I can take no man's word for anything. What I am after is the proof in everything."

Allen was more pale than ever, and a perspiration was on his face.

"But you will ruin George Stroughtenberg!" he cried. "This is something that must not become known to the world. It might even put the crime upon him, innocent though he is."

"Do you know he is innocent?"

"I can swear to it. You are making a mistake—a great mistake. Take my word for it and let it drop."

"As if I would not be making a greater mistake doing that. If you can prove George Stroughtenberg's innocence, you are just the man I want. Detectives do not do business the way you suggest."

"But it will ruin the man, I tell you. Can I not convince you of the truth of that?"

"He will have you to thank for it, then."

"See here, let me go and I will give you a thousand dollars, right in hand. Let the matter drop, so far as Mount Vernon is

concerned, and I will give you two thousand. No good can come of letting the thing out, but much harm."

"You do not know the man you are talking to," said the Broadway Sport to that. "Come, will you make a clean breast of it all, or must I take you to the nearest station and make a charge against you? You can have it either way you want it; say quick."

"Do what you please with me; I'll never tell you what you are after. You will find that you cannot hold me, curse you!"

"Come on, then."

At that moment, though, Allen showed fight, trying to overcome the detective and break away.

He found more than his match in Floyd Kempton, however, and after a tussle of brief duration he was docile enough, with a pair of nippers on his wrists. Then the detective steered him for the nearest station.

The Broadway Sport was determined, but Allen's stubbornness equaled Kempton's determination, and although he was locked up under a serious charge, yet he refused to open his lips. What the secret was could not be got out of him, but it yet remained to corner George Stroughtenberg and force it from him.

Fred Fly, meantime, with George Stroughtenberg, had reached New York before the other two, as shown.

The Ferret had gone straight home, with the understanding that he was to call upon George at an early hour the following forenoon.

Stroughtenberg, too, had gone home, with a greatly troubled mind. There was something he could not understand, something he could not fathom, in Allen's visit to Mount Vernon.

"And to the very house, too," he said to himself. "What can it mean, what does it mean? But I will know; I will trust Fred Fly with the matter, for he is wise for his years and thoroughly devoted to me, and he can find out and not let it be known."

On the following morning, as agreed, Fred called at the house.

George Stroughtenberg was eagerly awaiting his coming in a small reception room just off the hall.

He had been pacing the floor, complaining to himself bitterly against the fate that had sent Allen to Mount Vernon, and still puzzling his brain trying to solve the enigma.

It was a relief to him when Fred arrived.

"Well, my boy, you are here, I see," he said. "Are you ready to undertake a responsible errand?"

"Yes, sir; I am ready for anything," Fred answered.

"I want you to go again to Mount Vernon."

"All right, sir, I'll go."

"And to the same house we saw Allen come out of yesterday."

"No matter where, sir; just you tell me what is wanted, and I'll do it if I can."

Stroughtenberg was about to lay out the work for the boy, when a servant opened the door. She announced that a man calling himself Paddy Gallagher wanted to see him in haste.

Paddy was promptly shown in.

"Begorra, sor," he said, without waiting to say a good-morning, "it is Frau Reizenstein has sent me to ye in a hurry."

"What is up, Paddy?"

"She has infirmashun, so she says, dat may be av use to ye. She heard two bla'guards talkin' near her stand, and whin Oi wint up to dhe store dhis marnin' to see if evryt'ing was all roight, she hustled me on up here fur ye."

"And did she not tell you what to tell me?"

"She said she must see ye hersel', sor."

A letter was at that moment handed in, and with a glance at the postmark, Stroughtenberg tore open the envelope, which he evidently had not intended to do before he looked at the postmark.

The letter was from Mount Vernon, and the moment he had read it his face paled. He crushed the letter in his hand, pulling at his mustache, and after pacing up and down the room a couple of times he turned suddenly to Fred, looking at him a moment before speaking.

"If I thought I could trust you that far, my boy," he said. "But it is impossible—Ah! Mr. Collins!"

The door had opened and the police detective entered the room.

The tone of the man's response was strange, and when a policeman came in close behind him, George Stroughtenberg paled.

"George Stroughtenberg, you are my prisoner," said the detective, in a hoarse tone. "Officer, take him in charge. Let me warn you, sir, that the less you say the better. Be cautious."

The arrested man reeled and would have fallen to the floor had not the officer held him up.

CHAPTER XV.

FRED GETS ON THE SCENT.

It was a thrilling moment.

Fred Fly, with fists doubled, looked as if ready to fight.

None the less Paddy Gallagher, who was staring as if he could not believe what he saw.

"This is a shame!" cried Fred Fly, unable to contain himself longer. "You never made a bigger mistake in your life, Mr. Detective!"

"Dhat is phwat's dhe matther!" chimed in Paddy. "Begorra, av Oi had a bit av a shtick it is tempted to bate ye wanst on dhe head to knock some sinse into ye Oi'd be!"

"Have a care, or you may get into trouble," was the warning.

"Upon what charge am I arrested?" George Stroughtenberg managed to inquire.

"On the charge of having some knowledge as to who killed your father, sir," the officer answered. "This is no time for you to deny it; take care what you say."

"I will say now, and hereafter, that I am innocent of any part or knowledge in that," George declared, earnestly. "Let me see my wife for a moment, and I will go with you. I must be the one to break this news to her, or the shock will kill her."

"Well, I can allow you that, provided you do not leave my sight," the detective agreed. "This is a sad business, Mr. Stroughtenberg, and I had rather this duty had fallen to any one else than me—"

"Never mind," said George, regaining his coolness. "Here, boy, I want you to go on an errand for me. I must notify my lawyer."

George sat down at a desk and motioned Fred Fly to approach.

"Fred," he whispered, "have confidence in me, for this charge is not true. Take this letter and burn it the very first chance you get. It is too late for the Mount Vernon business now."

Fred took the crumpled letter and it immediately disappeared up his sleeve, the detective not getting so much as a glimpse of it.

"I think you had better go around and tell Mr. Wolraven I must see him, first of all," Stroughtenberg said, in a louder voice. "This is his address," and he penciled the street and number on a scrap of paper.

"I will let him see to the business of notifying my lawyer."

"Yes, sir," said Fred.

"That will save time for you, officer," said George. "It would waste time needlessly for me to write a letter to the lawyer. Now, come with me and I'll say good-by to my wife."

He motioned Fred to be off, and asked the detective to follow him into another room.

Fred lost no time in obeying.

George Stroughtenberg had married a wife of his father's choosing, and they had all made their home in the one house.

George bade a servant summon his wife, and she and his two daughters came down to the parlor in somewhat of surprise to learn what was wanted, for they had gained an inkling that something was wrong.

"George!" the wife exclaimed, "what is it? What does this mean?"

"There is a misunderstanding, that is all, and I have got to go with this gentleman to the police to straighten it out. Do not be alarmed; an arrest has been made, you know. If I do not return soon, I will send Mr. Wolraven to explain to you."

"George, I fear—"

"You fear what, wife? There is nothing to fear."

"Oh! I do not know; something is going to happen, or has happened. Is it that you are arrested?"

"Yes, owing to a misunderstanding of certain circumstances. Do not give it a moment's concern. There is one other thing of far more importance that I must prepare you for."

"Heavens! what is it?"

The three were wringing their hands.

"You may hear of something to my harm; do not give it credence till you hear what I have to say."

"George! George! You must not leave us thus! Tell us all, tell us everything! There is something you are holding back, and that may do you harm if you persist."

"Trust me," said the husband, smiling to reassure them. "Look for me or Wolraven before noon. Now, sir, we will go."

But the leave-taking was not so abrupt; there were fond embraces and whispers of confidence, and when the husband and father finally left the house he left his wife and daughters in tears, yet encouraged.

Meanwhile, Fred Fly had not been idle.

He had set forward immediately upon the errand that had been intrusted to him, wondering what it all meant.

He was more puzzled than ever, yet he steadfastly believed in the innocence of Mr. Stroughtenberg. He knew him too well to be deceived in him, he thought; besides, had he not assured him again?

And that letter that he had been told to destroy at the very first opportunity—What harm if he read it?

His curiosity was too great for him to forego the privilege.

Taking it out of his sleeve, he smoothed out the page sufficiently to enable him to master the contents, and read:

"Mount Vernon, N. Y.,

"(dated).

"George Stroughtenberg: I have just heard that you are in great trouble. Perhaps danger may be near you, if the truth is discovered. If you will pay me ten thousand dollars quickly, I will release you forever."

"YOUR LAWFUL WIFE."

"Whew!" the ferret whistled. "Here is a go, sure enough! So this is what took Allen to Mount Vernon, it is? Then he and Mrs. Lawful Wife stand in together, do they? Bet my money that George is being fleeced by a set of scamps, that is what I bet. But, if she is his wife—Well, it is too deep for me."

Having no chance just then to burn the letter, he folded it in small compass and thrust it down into his shoe.

Meanwhile, he had been hurrying right along.

When he came to his destination he was on the side of the street opposite the house he was heading for.

He was about to cross over, when a rough-looking man stopped him, a fellow with about as "hard" a visage as Fred had ever beheld in his life, and asked:

"Boy, do you live near here?"

"Yes, I'm livin' here," was the prompt answer.

The man did not catch the full significance of Fred's reply to the question.

"Well, can you tell me who lives in that house right over there?" and he mentioned the number. "He is a tall man with light whiskers."

The description fitted Samuel Wolraven, and Fred had no doubt but he was the person the fellow meant, but he did not intend to give any information unless he knew more about the man.

"Yes, I know," he said, "but I don't know that I'll tell you; what do you want to know for?"

The inquirer was Rummy Mike.

He had been for some time trying to get the desired information, in his poor manner.

It will be remembered that Fred Fly had not got a sight of this man at the time of his rescue of the Broadway Sport, hence he could not be expected to recognize him.

"'Cause, I have got business with that feller, but hang me if I can think of his name," said Rummy. "If you will tell me what it is I will be a heap and more obliged to you."

"What is your business with him?"

"Huh! What's that to you?"

"Mebby the man is my dad, for all you know."

"Jingo! Is he, though? If that is the case, will you say a word to him for me?"

"Sure I will. I am going right in the house now, and if it is anything honest I won't mind giving the message for you. What is it?"

Fred had awakened to the possible importance of the situation. Here was a hard-looking fellow seeking to get an interview with the store superintendent, and was it not just possible that he possessed some information that would throw light upon the mystery and give Mr. Wolraven something by which to clear George and set the matter straight? It might possibly lead to the arrest of the real murderer!

CHAPTER XVI.

FRED MAKES A SCOOP.

Rummy Mike looked at the ferret searching before he spoke again.

He was evidently trying to determine just what would be best for him to say under the circumstances.

"I'll tell you what to say to him," he soon arrived at his decision. "You say to him that a friend of Mr. Gardner's wants to see hm bad, on p'tic'lar business. See?"

"Oh, yes, I see," said Fred; "it is as clear as mud to me. If that is the case, why didn't you prance right up to the door and make known your wants? But you said you couldn't think of his name; I savvy. Well, you wait right here, and I will tell him."

"All right, me son; don't forget a word of it."

"Nary a word," Fred promised.

He crossed the street and pulled the bell, and in a few moments the door opened.

"I want to see Mr. Wolraven," Fred announced.

"What is your name?" was asked.

"Fred Fly."

He had not long to wait; his name was enough, and he was shown up to Mr. Wolraven's room.

"What is it, Fred?" Wolraven asked, somewhat eagerly.

"Mr. George wants to see you, sir."

"George Stroughtenberg wants to see me?" he repeated, and Fred imagined that he spoke anxiously. "I was going there within the next hour. What does he want to see me for, Fred?"

"Why, he has been arrested, and—"

"Arrested?"

"Yes; and he wants to see you right off quick to attend to some business about getting him out, or fixing up something; I don't know what, but he wants to see you right away. Something about seeing his lawyer for him, for one thing; he will tell you."

"Yes, yes, of course I will go, certainly. I will be ready in five minutes, Fred. Too bad that he has been arrested; what were the fools thinking about, anyhow?"

He hastened about making himself ready for the street.

"Then, I have got another message for you," said Fred. "And it may be a clew to the crime."

Wolraven stopped short in what he was doing at the moment, and stared at the boy in a penetrating manner. There was something about his actions that struck Fred as queer.

"What do you mean?" the man demanded.

"Why, I mean what I say," answered Fred. "As I was coming in here a hard-looking customer stopped me and asked me to tell you something."

"And what was it?" showing excitement. "Don't dally about it, Fred, but spit it out. You are too slow, when every minute may be of importance. Who was the fellow?"

"I'll never tell you that, sir, but he said tell Mr. Wolraven that a friend of Mr. Gardner's wants to see him bad on particular business— Why, what is the matter, sir? Are you sick? You look as if you had seen a ghost or somethin' in that line."

The man had turned suddenly the hue of death.

"Stooping over has made me dizzy, that is all," he explained. "Did the man give you his name?"

"No, sir."

"And where is he now?"

"Waitin' outside there, across the street."

Wolraven stepped to the window and looked out, concealing himself behind the curtains.

"I don't see what business such a fellow as that can have with me," he said, aloud. "I don't know; never saw him before. Do you know the man, Fred?"

"No, sir."

"I do know a man by the name of Gardner, so it may be all right. You may tell Mr. George that I will come to him as soon as possible. You had better not wait for me, I guess."

"All right, sir."

"And you may say to that fellow, as you go out, that I will be out in a few minutes and will hear what he has to say."

Fred took leave and hastened to the street, where he motioned to the man to join him. The fellow came across to where Fred waited for him, and when he came up, demanded:

"Well?"

"He will be out in a minute, and will see you," Fred told him.

"Good enough. I thought that would bring him, if anything. I am ever so much obliged to you, me son."

"Oh, you're welcome," said Fred, care-

lessly. "I don't know what you want to see him for, but when I mentioned Gardner's name it knocked him chalk white."

Fred said this as a feeler, for he wondered what it all indicated, anyhow.

The man laughed lightly, and rejoined:

"Yes, I thought mebbe it would, but I had to hit hard the first shot, you see. But, of course you don't see, and it is none of your business, anyhow. Run along with you!"

Wondering still more, Fred hastened off without saying anything further. But he had no intention of giving the matter up yet.

Turning the first corner, he there stopped.

"I am going to see more of this business," he said to himself. "I am wallowing up to my middle in mystery as it is, and a little more can't make a whole lot of difference."

Peering around the corner, he presently saw Wolraven come out of the house and advance in his direction.

He had taken but a few steps when the hard-looking fellow sidled up to him.

Wolraven looked black enough to scare the fellow, but the man did not appear to be scared to any extent. He pressed close, said something, and even from that distance Fred saw the superintendent's face blanch again.

They came on, both talking earnestly, and as they neared the corner Fred looked for a place of concealment.

Right on the corner of the block was a frame evidently used to place the wooden shutters of the windows in when they were down, but now the store at the corner happened to be vacant.

Fred slipped into that box, and in a few moments the two men came up and stopped within a foot of him.

"Yer see et ain't no use," the rough-looking fellow was saying. "I have got it down too fine fer you to git out of it. Give me five hundred, right in hand, and I am as mum as a mouse."

"On one condition," said Wolraven, huskily.

"Name et."

"That you leave this part of the country immediately, and never return to it. If you will not agree to do that, not a cent do you get, but I will hand you over to the police this minute. What do you say? I have no time to fool away with you."

"I ain't much afraid of your doin' that, boss, but as that is what I intended doin' anyhow, I 'gree to what you say. Give me the stuff, and you won't see me again."

"All right; hold out your dirty hand."

Wolraven took a wallet from his pocket, and Fred Fly saw him count out five hundred dollars and place it in the man's hand.

"There you are," he said, bitterly. "Never let me see your face again."

He hastened off, leaving the fellow gloating over his good fortune.

"This here is what I call handsome," the fellow said to himself, when left alone. "Here I have made a fine haul, take it all around, and no stain on my hands, either. Good-by to New York now, fer a spell, and they will look a long time before they find Rummy Mike."

At mention of that name Fred Fly's heart gave a great bound. It was the escaped convict, for whom the Broadway Sport had been looking!

The man pocketed the money and moved away, and Fred set out after him, keeping him well in sight until a policeman was seen, when Fred motioned eagerly to him to come along.

Straight to the point Fred told who Rummy was, and as much as necessary of his recent doings, including his attempt on the life of the Broadway Sport, and

with Fred for his proof the officer went forward and laid a detaining hand on Rummy's shoulder.

Half an hour later he was snug in a cell of a police station.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BOLD CHARGE MADE.

Frau Reizenstein was dozing in her chair when Paddy Gallagher came up to her stand.

"Wake up, ould woman!" Paddy exclaimed. "Sorry is the news Oi have fur ye, allanna!"

"Id vas not schleebing I vas, Baddy," the old woman declared. "What vas id?"

"George Stroughtenberg has been arrested, so he has, so he has."

"Mein Gott! Ish d'ot so?"

"Do ye be afther thinkin' dhat Oi would come to yet wi'd a loie on me lips, Frau Reizenstein? Av coarse it is threue."

"What for droubles vas id, anyvay? How can ve dell him what peen der matter vas, ain'dt id? Baddy, I hafe to dell you all apoudt d'ot, unt you hafe to go mit der bolices—"

"Whist! Here comes Fred Fly!"

So it was, and coming in haste, his face radiant with the success he had just met.

"Hello, Paddy!" he exclaimed. "Hello, Frau! Don't ask me a single question, for I am goin' post haste with a special stamp attached. I want to ask you one question, Frau."

"Mein gootness! What vas id, Fret?"

"What is the news you have for Mr. George? What was it you wanted to see him about? Tell me, quick, for I am goin' to see him, and will tell him. Paddy has told you where he is, I suppose."

"Yaw, yaw; d'ot vas so; unt I doolt you poote gwick, ain'dt id. Zwei fellers come along py mein standt, when I vas dozing, unt d'ey t'ink I vas schleebing, unt I hear me all what d'ey hafe to say mit d'em-selves, maype. Dey hafe got Broadway Sport in some tight blaces."

"Make it short," Fred urged. "Give it to me all in a lump, old lady."

But that was impossible; it took Frau Reizenstein just so long, and Fred had to walt with what patience he could.

The sum and substance of it, when he got it all, was this: Two men, to revenge themselves upon Rummy Mike, first, had taken Broadway Sport prisoner. They were going to kill the sport and lay the crime at his door. Needless to say, they were the two who had escaped from the house where the first attempt had been made to kill the detective.

Not only that, but that night they were going to rob the Broadway store, having got hold of inside information concerning the whole scheme, and their arrest, Fred believed, would throw additional light upon the murder of Mr. Stroughtenberg.

Fred hastened to see George Stroughtenberg, having told Frau and Paddy to walt and watch, but to say nothing.

Mr. Wolraven was with George when he arrived.

"You did prompt work, Fred," said George. "Mr. Wolraven got here ahead of you, you see. There is nothing more you can do, now; he will attend to everything."

"He will, eh?" said Fred, in a queer way. "I am of the opinion that Mr. Wolraven has been 'tending to too much already, Mr. George."

Fred looked straight at Wolraven as he spoke, and the man turned as pale as Fred had seen him turn before, and his eyes flashed.

"Boy, what do you mean?" he snarled.

"I'll tell Mr. George and these policemen what I mean," said Fred, putting himself to his unpleasant task with grim

determination. "Officers, I demand that you arrest that man."

"Arrest me!" cried Wolraven, leaping to his feet. "Boy, you are an idiot!"

"Maybe I am, but I happen to know what I am talking about just now. If there was suspicion enough for arresting George Stroughtenberg, there is enough to arrest you, and you are no better than he is, I take it. I mean business, officers; I demand his arrest."

George Stroughtenberg was too amazed to speak, and there was but one thing the officers could do. They had to detain the man until they heard what the boy had to say.

"The gentleman will remain, of course," said the captain. "Let us hear what you have to say."

"You have held that Rummy Mike has been taken?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm the kid that got him scooped. I saw this man pay him five hundred dollars for something that was done yesterday, and you know that yesterday I was the means of saving the life of Broadway Sport when Rummy Mike tried to kill him. Now, add two and two together, and see what you've got."

Fred spoke in such a bold, decisive manner that his words carried conviction to his hearers.

"What have you to say, sir?" the captain asked Wolraven.

"Why, it is an absurd mistake, sir," was the indignant denial. "He has mistaken some one else for me."

"Do you think that is likely, when I know him as well as I know Mr. Stroughtenberg?" demanded Fred. "Besides, it wasn't ten minutes after I had seen him in his own house."

"What was that money paid for?" asked the police captain.

"I deny that it was paid," said the man.

"You have only to bring Rummy Mike to prove it," said Fred.

"Bring him, by all means," Wolraven invited. "I know of no better way to clear myself of this boy's crazy charge."

"Surely, Fred, you have made a serious mistake," said George Stroughtenberg. "Mr. Wolraven is above suspicion; he is my best friend in this trying hour."

"No mistake about it, boss," the boy stoutly maintained. "I know what I saw; and I mean to stick to it. Of course, I don't know what the money was paid for, but money paid to a fellow like Rummy Mike is suspicious, and I want you to prove what I say before you let him go."

"I demand my instant liberty," cried Wolraven. "I have business to attend to, and must not be detained."

"Are you any better than Mr. George?" demanded Fred.

"The boy's charge must be investigated," said the officer. "I will have Rummy Mike brought here. Meantime, you will have to stay, Mr. Wolraven."

Wolraven raved, but that did no good; he had to stay.

In due time Rummy Mike was on hand, and he was in just the mood to declare the truth of the whole matter.

He not only supported the story Fred had told, but went further and told all about Wolraven's engaging Hen Gardner to murder the Broadway Sport, and how he, Rummy, had been hired by Gardner to do the deed.

"But we didn't do it, and didn't intend to do it," Rummy lied, for sake of making his own crime less offensive. "We jest meant to give Kempton a scare, make believe he had been killed and get the boodle and light out. That is the whole truth."

Wolraven listened with a sullen look on his face.

"That is a neat lie!" he sneered, when

he had heard all. "Why should I seek the life of the Broadway Sport? He never crossed me in his life, and if he had done so, murder is not in my line. Gentlemen, I contend that I am mistaken for some one else."

"Oh! come off!" cried Rummy. "That is too thin. You are the man who paid me the five hundred."

"Of course he is," declared Fred. "He has got to be held."

And he was held.

Fred carried a message home for Mr. Stroughtenberg, and after that went immediately in search of Detective Collins.

Collins had by this time heard of the arrests that had been made, and was prepared for the story Fred had to tell. Together they set out in search of Hen Gardner.

Fred did not know him, but he did know the two men who had been concerned with him and the first prisoner taken, in their attempt to murder the detective, and he hoped to get sight of one or both of them. But they were not seen, although Gardner was found and arrested.

He, naturally, supported the story told by Wolraven, but there was nothing in the charge made by Rummy Mike; but that was not enough to release them, in the face of other evidence, and they were held to await thorough investigation. None of the mystery had as yet been solved, and everything was in a boil of confusion, to that time.

But the case was nearing its ending, and Fred Fly was the one destined to solve the mysteries and clear the affair up.

His business now was to find the Broadway Sport.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GRAND DENOUEMENT.

Paddy Gallagher remained near the store, to aid in the arrest of the two men should they show themselves there again, with Frau Reizenstein to point them out, and Fred Fly hunted for them through all the haunts where they were likely to be found.

At last, toward night, he saw one of them, and was thus rewarded for his patience. The other was not long in coming, and Fred saw them holding an earnest consultation together. No opportunity was given him to overhear what was said, so he had to content himself with shadowing them.

Finally they appeared to come to an understanding, and set out in company, Fred keeping them in sight. They led him a long chase, but at last came to a stop before a shop which had the appearance of being closed and tenantless. There they again consulted.

Here was a chance for Fred to creep near, and he took advantage of it.

"No, I tell ye it is too early," he heard one of the fellows saying. "Let's go into that saloon on the corner there and wait an hour, and then come back. He will keep all right."

"Well, ef you say so. We don't want no suspicion to 'tach to us, ye know."

"That is what I am takin' care of. Come on. We'll have 'venge on Rummy fer the mean way he served us. When this feller is found, with Rummy's knife in him, it will go hard with Rummy, you bet."

They surveyed the closed shop, and slouched off.

Fred Fly came out from his place of concealment, and when the two rascals had passed out of sight he drew a long whistle.

"Whe—e—ew! If that isn't a rummy go, then I don't know what my name is! And I'll bet a penny the Broadway Sport is in this shebang, waitin' fer somebody about my size to rescue him again."

Fred took a good survey of the place.

"It will do me good to rescue him again," he said to himself. "I can afford to forgive him, now, for what I fancied he was cheating me out of, and maybe I was lookin' at it cross-eyed, anyhow. That don't matter a bit; if the Broadway Sport is in that den he has got to come out, you bet!"

Fred looked around for an officer, and making known who he was, and getting the officer interested in the matter by telling him about the arrests already made, gave him to understand that he would come in for a share of the honors himself if he would lend the required assistance. Then he let him into the matter fully, and told him what was to be done.

The officer was more than willing to aid him, and it took but a short time to gain an entrance into the little shop.

Sure enough, there the Broadway Sport was found, almost dead from being so long in so cramped a position, and it required time and effort for him to get the use of his limbs and tongue.

"This wouldn't have happened, Fred, if we had stuck together," he said. "I'm sorry I turned you back, and sorry that you didn't stick to me in the Mount Vernon business. I landed my man all right, but these fellows got onto me the next hour and landed me."

"Don't mention it," said Fred. "I'm sorry, too, but I believe it was ordered all for the best. We will land them, now, for they are coming here inside of an hour to murder you and put the crime on Rummy Mike, and if we don't make them sick it will be strange. We are partners on this case, anyhow, and we will stick together from this time on. I have got a wagon load of clews for you, and we'll soon clear it up."

While they waited, Fred told all that had taken place, and Kempton listened with keen interest.

A couple of policemen were there with them. After a while the two rascals were heard making their way in. They came in boldly by the front entrance, admitting themselves with a key, locking the door after them. There was a short hall, leading to the room in which they had left their victim. In the hall they lighted a lamp, and when they entered the room they met the surprise of their lives. Handcuffs were on them before they could realize what had happened, and great was their chagrin to find that their prisoner was their captor.

George Stroughtenberg was released on his own bond, and immediately after the day of the funeral the case was looked into. Meantime, the Broadway Sport, armed with the clews which Fred Fly had worked up, had been prying into the matter, and other evidence having been brought to light, he had a clear case. While the court was waiting for the prisoners news was brought that the old man and Wolraven had killed themselves in their cells.

The detective did not show surprise, but he was sorry that he could not have sent Wolraven to the punishment he so richly deserved, for he it was who had murdered Thomas Stroughtenberg. The motive for the crime was one that no one would have suspected.

For years Wolraven had been dealing "crooked" with the house, with Hen Gardner as chief helper. To such an extent had the trusted employe carried on his villainy, that a London branch of the business was now practically his own, carried on by Stroughtenberg's capital and prestige. At last, however, old Mr. Stroughtenberg had become aware of it, and had called in the private detective. For months the rascally superintendent had been pre-

pared to strike at a moment's notice, and he did strike, not only at the old merchant, but at the detective as well. He believed that the detective already knew what was required of him, but in that he was mistaken, as he soon discovered. He had killed Mr. Stroughtenberg by throwing the keen heavy dagger at him through an open wicket window behind where he sat.

The old man who had called on the previous day was Mr. Stroughtenberg's only brother, who, for a crime done in his youth, had been sentenced to a long term in prison, but had made his escape. After his escape, Thomas had set him up in business in a distant part of the country, under an assumed name. But the old evil was in him, and the time spent in prison had not bettered the man. Twi James "Hutton" went to the bad, and for the third time Thomas Stroughtenberg put him on his feet and started him anew, but telling him on the third occasion that it was the last time. The outcast brother failed yet again, however, and finding that he was not going to be helped, came to New York to force it. He threatened to tell who he was and drag the family name in the mud if Thomas did not again establish him. Thomas refused, and James went off in anger, giving Thomas twenty-four hours in which to think it over and decide finally. When he returned, he learned that his brother had been killed.

The secret between George Stroughtenberg and Frank Allen, by which Allen had for years made George almost his slave, was one of those skeletons which come creeping out of family closets now and then to astonish the world. In early youth George had married a girl, whom, he knew, his family would not recognize. He was still but a youth when his father compelled him to marry a young lady of his own choosing, the daughter of a very dear friend, and of whom he was guardian. There was money in the arrangement as well as sentiment. George had rebelled, at first, but, afraid to tell the truth, and dreading the threatened penalty his father attached to his refusal, he finally married as desired. He had previously arranged with his lawful wife, that by paying her a stipulated sum regularly, she was never to make herself known nor in any manner molest him. This money he had paid, faithfully, year after year; but it now turned out that he had really been paying it to Frank Allen, the woman having died just a day previous to George's second marriage! Allen, somehow learning the secret, had carried on the game, with the aid of a woman confederate, to the then present time. This part of the matter was never made public; so George's wife and daughters were spared the humiliation the knowledge of it would have brought to them.

The mysteries straightened out, the reliable old business house went on as before, with George at its head. He carried forward his father's plans and business methods, and while he fills well the place, it must be years and years before the honorable founder of the house can be forgotten.

Fred Fly is there rising slowly, but surely, to a post of responsible trust. He has no better friend than Floyd Kempton, the Broadway Sport, who is still in the harness as a detective.

Needless to say, the rascally characters in our romance were dealt with to the full extent of the law as it was found to apply to their offenses.

Frau Reizenstein's fears were groundless, for she was not turned away from her place in the main doorway of the big building; but when the chill winds of autumn began to whistle around the street corners, and Paddy Gallagher suggested to her how much better it would be for her to remain snug within doors in a cosy lit-

tle home, with himself for a companion—mentioned incidentally, where she could make pies to her heart's delight—and his liking, she decided to make the change.

THE END.

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